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'Urban apathy' drives down polling to 60.4%

EC flags low turnout in Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, Lucknow; Maharashtra records lowest turnout in Phase 5 at 54.33%; West Bengal, where violence broke out in many constituencies, logged 76.05%

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election on Monday saw a 60.48% voter turnout till 11.50 p.m., amid reports of minor incidents of violence from West Bengal.

Maharashtra recorded the lowest turnout at 54.33% this time, while West Bengal saw the highest at 76.05%.

The voting percentage in Bihar was 54.85, Jharkhand 63.09, Odisha 69.34, Uttar Pradesh 57.79 and Ladakh 69.62.

The Election Commission (EC) said in a statement that "parliamentary constituencies in various cities such as Mumbai, Thane, Nashik and Lucknow continued the trend of urban apathy as noticed in last Lok Sabha election in 2019." With this phase, polling has ended in all 48 seats of Maharashtra.

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MORE POLL REPORTS
» PAGE 11

Patient wait: People wait to cast their votes in the Lok Sabha election in Saran of Bihar on Monday. PTI

Baramulla logs 58.17% polling

Peerzada Ashiq
BARAMULLA

The Baramulla Lok Sabha seat in Kashmir Valley logged a poll percentage of 58.17 by 11.50 p.m. on Monday, breaking its record of 46.65% in 1996.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 11

Helicopter crash kills Iran President, Foreign Minister

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were confirmed dead on Monday after search and rescue teams found their crashed helicopter in a fog-shrouded mountain region, sparking mourning in the Islamic Republic.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared five days of mourning and assigned Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber, 68, to assume interim duties ahead of elections which will be held on June 28.

Earlier on Monday, state TV announced that "the servant of the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, has achieved the highest level of martyrdom" and broadcast pictures from Raisi's life as a voice recited the Koran.

Condolences flooded in from Palestinian militant group Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Syria, all members of the so-called Axis of Resistance against Israel and its allies, at a time of high West Asia tensions over the Gaza war.

Mr. Khamenei had urged Iranians on Sunday, as the search was still ongoing, to "not worry" about the leadership of the country, saying "there will be no disruption in the country's work".

Iran's one-time top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri was appointed Acting Foreign Minister.

A black flag was hoisted at a major Shia shrine in the city of Qom as a sign of mourning for Raisi, whom many had considered a favourite to one day succeed the Supreme Leader.

Rescue team members recover the body of a victim from the helicopter crash site in Varzaghan of Iran on Monday. AFP

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STATE MOURNING IN INDIA
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A HARDLINE CLERIC
» PAGE 14

IN BRIEF

Irregularities in donations AAP received, says ED

NEW DELHI
Two Enforcement Directorate (ED) documents alleging irregularities in the donations received by AAP during 2014-2022 from sources in several countries surfaced on Monday. » Page 4

Naveen's office, home taken over by miscreants: PM

BHUBANESWAR
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's office and residence had been taken over by miscreants, and this set-up would be taken apart when the BJP came to power. » Page 12

SEVEN-MONTH WAR
Arrest warrant against Israel PM, Hamas leaders
WORLD » PAGE 14

FLAWS FLAGGED
ICMR distances itself from Covaxin study
NEWS » PAGE 10

Sri Lankan nationals with 'IS links' held

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) arrested four Sri Lankan nationals allegedly linked with the Islamic State (IS) at the Sardar Vallabhai Patel Airport here on Monday.

The accused, Mohammad Nusrat, 35, Mohammad Faarukh, 35, Mohammad Nafran, 27, and Mohammad Rasdeen, 43, took a flight from Colombo and reached Chennai in the early hours of Sunday, Director-General of Police Vikas Sahay said.

From Chennai, they took another flight to Ahmedabad, where they landed around 8 p.m. on Sunday, he said.

They were nabbed at the airport here when they were waiting for their Pakistani handler.

The ATS officials have taken them into custody and interrogation is under way.

Mr. Sahay said the men travelled to India to carry out terror activities at the behest of the IS.

They told investigators that they were earlier associated with the banned Sri Lankan radical militant outfit, National Thowheeth Jamath.

The four accused joined the IS after getting in touch with Pakistani handler Abu Bakr Al Bagdadi, Mr. Sahay said.

U.K. court allows WikiLeaks founder Assange to appeal extradition to U.S.

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

The U.K. High Court on Monday granted WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange a reprieve by allowing him to appeal his extradition to the United States.

The 52-year-old Australian has been charged on multiple counts for publishing sensitive military and diplomatic cables in 2010 and violating the U.S.'s Espionage Act. The U.S. has argued that lives were put at risk because the leaked documents contained unredacted names.

In May, the court cleared the extradition conditional on the U.S. providing two assurances: one, the death penalty would not be applied in Mr. Assange's case and two, Mr. Assange would be allowed to rely on the First Amendment (i.e., free speech rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution) during his trial.

In a short court session on Monday, two judges ruled that the U.S. government had not met the requirements.

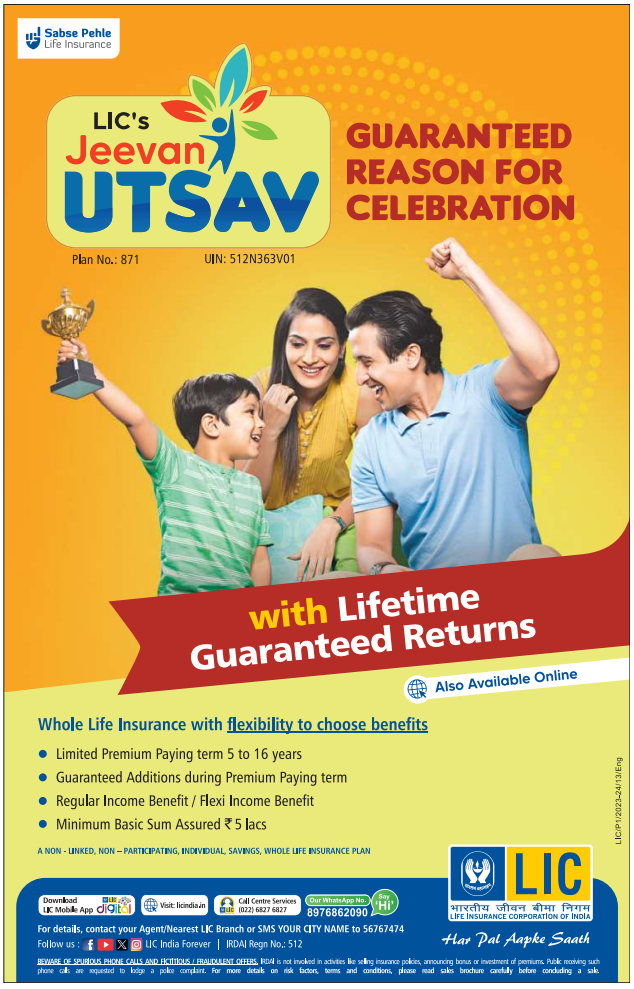
Specifically, in April, the U.S. government had said Mr. Assange "will have the ability to raise and seek to rely upon" the First Amendment but whether that would apply to a non-U.S. national would be up to the courts. Last week, his lawyer, Jennifer Robinson, had called that a "non-assurance".

A crowd that had gathered outside the court cheered as it heard the outcome of the legal proceedings. Addressing the crowd, Mr. Assange's wife, Stella, described the U.S. arguments as "trying to paint lipstick on a pig" and the case as an "attack on journalists everywhere".

"How long can this go on for?" she said, making a case for her family to be reunited. Mr. Assange has been held at the high-security Belmarsh prison since 2019.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Public backing: A protester stands outside the High Court in London on Monday seeking the release of Julian Assange. AP



DoE orders closure of all schools

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) on Monday directed private and government-aided schools that had not closed for summer vacation despite the heatwave to do so with immediate effect.

The circular issued on Monday stated that all schools were directed to observe summer vacation from May 11 to June 30. "However, it has been observed that some of the government-aided and unaided recognised private schools are still open," it said.

Delhi has seen a steady rise in temperature, with the mercury touching 44.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the highest for the season so far, and the India Meteorological Department issuing a red alert.

'Probe in only one case against Kejriwal has started, seven to go'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah attacks AAP chief over corruption; cites Maliwal assault case, asks whether Delhi CM can ensure safety of women; U.P. CM and BJP chief also hold rallies in Capital; PM Modi likely to helm election event today

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said only one case of corruption had been opened against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and that seven more need to be investigated.

"Only the liquor scam has been probed so far. Investigation into seven other scams remains to be done," Mr. Shah said at a 'Jan Sabha' in Sangam Vihar in support of the party's South Delhi nominee Ramvir Singh Bidhuri. He accused the AAP government of committing scams in the procurement of medicines and buses, and in the renovation of the Chief Minister House and classrooms in Delhi government schools.

The Delhi Chief Minister was arrested on March 21 in the excise policy-linked money laundering case and shifted to Tihar Jail on April 1. On May 10, the Supreme Court granted him interim bail until June 1 to campaign for the election. The Capital will vote on May 25.

The former BJP national president also spoke about the alleged assault on AAP's Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal and asked whether Mr. Kejriwal could ensure the safety of women in the city.

Mr. Shah also attacked the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), saying even if the Opposition parties were to somehow win the election, the alliance would have Prime Ministers on a rotational basis.

He said the BJP-led Centre would ensure that all unauthorised colonies in Delhi are regularised by 2026.

Along with Mr. Shah, BJP president J.P. Nadda, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also held rallies in different parts of the city to support the party's Lok Sabha nominees. With campaigning in Delhi set to end on Thursday, the BJP is likely to deploy all its big leaders in a last-minute push.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who held a rally in the national capital on May 18, is likely to address a public event on Tuesday in west Delhi's Dwarka.

Union Minister Amit Shah taking part in an election rally in support of BJP's South Delhi candidate Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday. SHASHI SHEKHAR VASHYAP

'Naya Lok'

Mr. Adityanath took on the AAP government, saying while cities adjoining the Capital had become world-class, Delhi had been turned into "hell". "There are around two crore people living in Delhi and 25 crore people living in Uttar Pradesh. They have turned Delhi into hell while Ghaziabad and Noida have become *naya lok* (new places)," he said.

Addressing a rally in Mayur Vihar , Mr. Adityanath said the Centre had carried out several development works in the National Capital Region, such as the Rapid Metro. Mr. Nadda held a rally in New Delhi for BJP nominee Bansuri Swaraj.

West Delhi LS seat tops in home voting

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The constituency of West Delhi recorded the highest number of voters availing the home voting facility in the Capital to exercise their franchise in the Lok Sabha election, according to the data released by the Election Commission.

AAP says threat to CM's life as graffiti asking him to 'leave' city spotted at metro stations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday claimed a threat to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's life after graffiti asking him to "leave" the Capital was found scribbled inside several coaches of the Delhi Metro and at stations.

The party called it part of a series of "conspiracies" hatched against the CM by the BJP, which denied the charge terming it a "ploy" by AAP to gain sympathy ahead of the Lok Sabha poll in the city on May 25.

The metro wing of the Delhi Police has lodged an FIR under the provisions dealing with defacement of property.

Several posts regarding the graffiti surfaced on Instagram, where the accused claimed the responsibility for the act.

Pictures and video clips of the graffiti showed several of these written inside metro trains, and on signboards at Patel Nagar and Rajiv Chowk metro stations.

Graffiti inside a metro coach asked the CM to ensure transparency in the Delhi Jal Board audits and sought his response on the alleged excise policy scam.

AAP calls it part of 'conspiracies' against the CM by the BJP, which termed it a "ploy" to gain sympathy before poll

A senior official of the DMRC warned passengers against such acts. "Co-passengers are also requested to report such acts to the metro authorities immediately," he said, adding that their security wing is in touch with the police for further action.

BJP conspiracy: Atishi

Meanwhile, Delhi Finance Minister told reporters, "The BJP is rattled by the fact that it is going to lose all seven [Lok Sabha] seats in Delhi. That is why it has been targeting the CM by hatching different conspiracies."

"They got him arrested on March 21 [in a money laundering case] and when he was lodged inside Tihar Jail, they stopped his insulin for 15 days and we had to approach the court for it. After he came out, they used [AAP Rajya Sabha member] Swati Maliwal to target him but that conspiracy also did not pay off ," she alleged.

"Now there is a danger to his life," she claimed while accusing the police of "inaction". "Where is their cyber cell? This shows that this is being orchestrated by the BJP," she alleged.

'Orchestrated by AAP'

Reacting to the allegations, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said the incident has been "orchestrated" by AAP to gain public sympathy.

Urging the Election Commission to increase the CM's security, he said the incident is being used to divert people's attention from the assault case lodged by Ms. Maliwal against Mr. Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

"My only question to Kejriwal is when he will break his silence on the Maliwal assault incident," he said.

ED applies for 14-day judicial custody of CM after June 2

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday sought an extension of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's judicial custody after he surrenders on June 2 in an excise policy-linked money laundering case.

The Central probe agency moved the application before Special Judge for the ED and CBI, Kaveri Baweja, seeking 14-day judicial custody of Mr. Kejriwal when he surrenders on June 2, claiming that the period of judicial custody granted earlier ends on Monday.

The CM is out on interim bail till June 1, following an order of the Supreme Court, which has directed him to surrender on June 2.

Meanwhile, the ED told the court that there is sufficient evidence against him and his co-accused, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K. Kavitha, to put them on trial in the case. It made the submission in support of its supplementary chargesheets filed against both politicians. The judge also extended Ms. Kavitha's custody till June 2.

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, MAY. 21		
RISE	05:28	SET 19:09
RISE	17:13	SET 03:46
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 22		
RISE	05:27	SET 19:10
RISE	18:11	SET 04:17
THURSDAY, MAY. 23		
RISE	05:27	SET 19:10
RISE	19:13	SET 04:53

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	44	29
Safdarjang	44	29
Palam	45	32

Delhi Palam Today
45°C Heat wave to prevail. Morning will be slight warm. The weather will be very hot and uneasy. Night also will be uneasy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
46°C Heat wave to continue. Weather will be dry. Morning will be uneasy. The day will be very hot and uneasy. Night will be slight warm.

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If any person(s) having objection with regard to ownership/mortgage of the said property is/are requested to intimate in writing to undersigned within 07 days from the date of issue of this notice at the address below. In the event no information is received within 07 days from date hereof, our Client i.e. **IndusInd Bank Ltd.** will proceed with the mortgage process.

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A-13, LGF, South Extn-II, New Delhi-49 # 011-40587824

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WHEREAS, the in-principle approval for transfer of Existing Licenses over the Land in favour of ORL has been granted by the DTCP vide memo no. LC-5281/PA(SK)/2024/12815 dated 24-04-2024.
AND WHEREAS, certain persons were earlier allotted units/ flats by IREO Residences Co. Pvt. Ltd. in the Group Housing Colony known as "Grand Hyatt Residences" on part of the area measuring 14.816 acres forming part of Licences Nos 63 of 2009, 107 of 2010, 60 of 2012 (hereinafter such persons referred as "Existing Allottees").
Now in compliance of condition no 5 of in-principle approval dated 24.04.2024 objections are hereby invited from the general public and Existing Allottees limited to adverse effect on their rights (if any) in respect of the transfer of the Existing Licenses over the Land (14.816 acres) from Commander & Ors. to and in favour of ORL together with documentary proof within 30 days of publication of this notice, failing which, it shall be presumed that there are no objections and/or any such objections shall be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. Any such objections must be addressed to the undersigned at their office at IREO Campus, Archview Drive, Ireo City, Golf Course Extension Road, Gurugram - 122001 with a copy sent by email to (i) ncp@ireo.in and (ii) cs@oberoirealty.com. For this purpose, a copy of In-Principle approval dated 24.04.2024 is available for perusal on (a) website http://www.ipkcomplainces.com; (b) in the office of undersigned at IREO Campus, Archview Drive, Ireo City, Golf Course Extension Road, Gurugram -122001, Haryana,) (c) at the office of ORL at Commerz, 3rd Floor, International Business Park, Oberoi Garden City, Off W.E. Highway, Goregaon (E), Mumbai – 400063 and (d) in the office of Senior Town Planner Sector – 14, HUDA Complex, Gurugram.
Place: Gurugram, Date: 16.5.2024
For
Commander Realtors Pvt. Ltd.
Authorized Signatory

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4	निविदा जमा करने (अपलोड करने) की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	दिनांक 16.05.2024 को 15:00 बजे तक	दिनांक 19.06.2024 को 15:00 बजे तक
6	प्री बीड़ मिटींग का तिथि एवं स्थान	1. दिनांक 26.04.2024 को 11:00 बजे अधीक्षण अभियंता, भवन अंचल, छपरा का कार्यालय 2. दिनांक 02.05.2024 को 11:00 बजे मुख्य अभियंता, उत्तर उपभाग भवन निर्माण विभाग, बिहार पटना का कार्यालय	1. दिनांक 06.06.2024 को 11:00 बजे अधीक्षण अभियंता, भवन अंचल, छपरा का कार्यालय 2. दिनांक 10.06.2024 को 11:00 बजे मुख्य अभियंता, उत्तर उपभाग भवन निर्माण विभाग, बिहार पटना का कार्यालय
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INBRIEF

Public support for INDIA is like 1977 wave, says Digvijaya

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Monday claimed that the public support for the INDIA bloc, led by his party, was comparable to the wave of 1977 which had brought the Janata Party to power. Talking to reporters at the Sadaqat Ashram, the State Congress headquarters, Mr. Singh demanded that the Election Commission take cognisance of alleged violations of the model code of conduct in speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He alleged that the PM was proving himself to be a "factory of lies" by claiming that Congress was in favour of giving reservations on religious lines. PTI

In Patna, PM visits late BJP leader Sushil Modi's residence

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday arrived in Patna, on his second visit to the city within a week, in the thick of the Lok Sabha election. Mr. Modi, who had last weekend held a roadshow in the city, was received at the airport by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha. Upon arriving in the city, the PM drove straight to the residence of Sushil Kumar Modi, senior BJP leader who died last week battling cancer. After condoling the bereaved family members, the PM reached the BJP's State headquarters to hold deliberations with party workers. PTI

Ahead of Delhi poll, ED alleges irregularities in donations AAP received

Calling it a political conspiracy by BJP, AAP leader Atishi says that since it was founded, her party had functioned with full transparency and every rupee that it received had been accounted for

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two documents of the Enforcement Directorate alleging irregularities in the donations received by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) during 2014-2022 from sources in several countries surfaced on Monday, days ahead of days ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi on May 25.

Reacting to the allegations, senior AAP leader Atishi said that since it was founded, the party had functioned with full transparency and that every rupee that it received via donations had been shown to the Election Commission of India (EC), Income-Tax Department, and every other institution in the country.

Calling it a political conspiracy by the BJP, Ms. Atishi said: "AAP has given its reply to the CBI, ED, MHA, and EC on this matter. Such false allegations brought up before the election will not be believed by the people of Delhi and Punjab who are going to vote."

Senior AAP leader Atishi addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

The papers comprise purported details shared by the agency with the Union Home Ministry on October 27, 2022, and on August 4, 2023. They allege that AAP received foreign funds in violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), Representation of the People Act, and the Indian Penal Code. Political parties are prohibited from taking funds from any foreign source defined under FCRA.

According to the documents, AAP received donations from those residing in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabiaetc.

It has been alleged that real identities of many donors were concealed and funds were also directly deposited to the party's IDBI bank account.

The ED detected the alleged irregularities during its probe into an international cartel involved in the smuggling of heroin from Pakistan to India. The agency had searched the premises of then AAP MLA from Bholath in Punjab, Sukhpal Singh Khaira, who was summoned as an accused to face the trial, and his associates. It seized documents purportedly containing details of foreign donations.

The agency alleged that the scrutiny of the seized documents revealed receipt of foreign donations totalling $1,19,000. In his statement, Mr. Khaira allegedly disclosed that the money was collected via overseas fund-raising campaign in the U.S. organised by AAP in April-May 2015.

'Related documents'

The ED summoned an AAP functionary who submitted the related documents. As alleged, the agency found that 155 persons residing abroad had donated ₹1.02 crore on 404 occasions using 55 passport numbers; 71 had used 21 mobile numbers for making total donations of about ₹99.90 lakh on 256 occasions; and 75 such donors have used 15 credit cards for donating over ₹19.92 lakh on 148 occasions.

First-time voters make a mark in Mumbai election

First-time voters display their voter cards outside a polling booth in Mumbai on Monday. AP

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

Almost one lakh first-time voters exercised their right to vote on Monday in Mumbai, which went to poll in the fifth and final phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra.

Several first-timers *The Hindu* spoke to said their choices were influenced by various factors such as talking to parents, content on social media, and personal research.

A few young voters voiced disillusionment, feeling no leader could adequately address their concerns or serve as a viable alternative.

"I am going to vote looking at the larger picture, what matters at the national level," said Ishika Dhanmeher while waiting for her turn to exercise her vote in Mahim.

Another young voter, Sneha Kumar from Dharavi, said people were aware of Maharashtra's political crisis but see this election as one that decides who gets to rule at the Centre.

Some leaned on their parents and relatives. Dharavi resident Vidya Narayankar, 19, said she voted on her father's instruction. Sakshi Tandel, 18, from Mahim said her aunt showed her the symbol.

Some did their homework thoroughly. "I voted for education. Fifteen candidates are competing here, and I studied them before making my decision," said Naseer Shaikh from Sion, Mumbai South Central seat.

Demands unmet by BJP govt., farmer, worker and sarpanch unions back Oppn. candidates in Haryana

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

"This is no ordinary [Lok Sabha] election. There are two forces. On the one hand is the National Democratic Alliance led by Narendra Modi. The big corporates want him to be Prime Minister for the third time and hand over the country's resources to them. On the other is the majority of the people of this country, who are struggling for their livelihood. The parties of INDIA bloc are with them," said Om Prakash, secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Kisan Sabha, Bhiwani, as he sat with a handful of elderly people around him in Khorda village last weekend.

Farmer, worker and employee unions during a march in Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana on May 17. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Prakash addressed around two dozen "nukkad sabhas" (street corner meetings) in as many villages in Charkhi Dadri's Badhra subdivision, represented by Jannayak Janta Party MLA Naina Chautala, in the second phase of a day-long campaign on May 17 by farmer, worker and employee unions against the Bharatiya Janata Party's Bhiwani-Mahendragarh candidate Dharambir Singh, who is in a direct contest with Mahendragarh MLA and Congress nominee Rao Dan Singh, an Ahir leader.

The office-bearers of these unions went around the Lok Sabha constituency in a long convoy of tractors.

In an election being fought in the State under the shadow of year-long farmers' agitation against the now-repealed farm laws, the farmer unions and various worker and employee unions, agitating for long for their demands, have lent support to the candidates of various Opposition parties.

In Kurukshetra, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni, one of the prominent leaders from the farmers' movement in 2021, announced support to the Indian National Lok Dal candidate Abhay Chautala, saying that it was his duty to support him since he had resigned as MLA in support of their agitation.

'Weak candidates'

Accusing the Congress of fielding weak candidates, Mr. Charuni's group has supported Bahujan Samaj Party's Inderjeet Navjot Jalmana in Karnal Lok Sabha, where the BJP has fielded former Chief Minister Manohar Lal.

In Gurgaon Lok Sabha, several trade and workers unions held a programme in Mahavir Park earlier this month extending support to Congress's Raj Babbar, who is in a direct contest with BJP's Rao Inderjit Singh. Haryana Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) vice-president Satvir Singh said unions in Haryana had opposed the BJP in previous Lok Sabha elections as well, but the efforts this time are more co-ordinated.

Miffed with the State government for allegedly curtailing the rights of village panchayats, the Haryana Sarpanch Association, representing the majority of the State's sarpanches, too has pledged support for the Congress.

Kejriwal aide taken to CM House to recreate 'crime scene'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The police on Monday took Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar to the CM House to recreate the scene of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal's alleged assault.

A senior police officer said Mr. Kumar was taken to the Chief Minister's residence to corroborate his version of the incident.

The police action came a day after they seized a digital video recorder from the Chief Minister's house as part of the investigation.

Meanwhile, Ms. Maliwal took to X, saying until she filed a complaint against Mr. Kumar, she was in the good books of AAP leaders and now she is being called a BJP "agent".

Bibhav Kumar leaves CM House in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

Ms. Maliwal also junked the charge that she was blackmailed into defaming Mr. Kejriwal by a "threat" to have a corruption case opened against her.

She said the proceedings in the case being referred to have been stayed for over a year now as no evidence could be found against her. "Despite the case, the L-G and the CM made me the DCW [Delhi Commission for Women] chief multiple times in the past," she added.

Mr. Kumar was arrested on May 18 after Ms. Maliwal lodged a formal complaint with the police that she was assaulted by him at the Chief Minister's residence, where she had gone to meet Mr. Kejriwal.

He has been booked under Indian Penal Code sections related to assault, criminal intimidation and outraging a woman's modesty. On Saturday, the court had sent him to five-day police custody.

AAP has accused the police of acting at the behest of the BJP to defame Mr. Kejriwal. The BJP has denied the charge, saying Mr. Kejriwal's insistence on sending a "top lawyer" to the Rajya Sabha from Delhi triggered the episode that resulted in the assault case.

Seat of the corridors of power, New Delhi LS constituency paints a picture of stark divides

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

"While the rich live in big houses with well-maintained parks, those who work in their homes reside just opposite their posh localities in shabby areas with dilapidated roads and clogged drains," says Savitri Devi, a domestic help.

However, Ms. Devi, who lives in a modest one-room accommodation with her family at Kotla Mubarakpur, doesn't mind it despite paying ₹5,000 more per month than what she used to pay when earlier in east Delhi.

"I earn much more from working at three posh houses here than what I used to make earlier," she says.

From historic structures to upscale markets and posh localities, the city's oldest parliamentary constituency boasts of lush-green lawns, picturesque parks adorned by tulips brought from abroad and impressive road infrastructure.

However, Ms. Devi's story also paints a picture of contrast of posh localities juxtaposed with some of the most underdeveloped areas.

While the constituency is known for places like Chanakyapuri, Greater Kailash, Connaught Place and Khan Market, areas like Ranjit Nagar, Zamrudpur, Inderpuri, and Naraina are crying for want of proper upkeep.

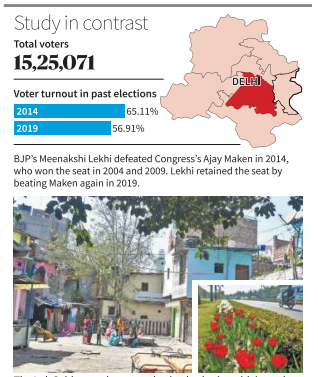
'Ignored by govts.'

Kamlesh Devi, a street vendor and Ranjit Nagar resident, is miffed at politicians as clogged drains spreading unbearable stink and dilapidated roads have always been a perennial problem.

"I can't recall when a politician of stature visited our area. Perhaps, we are not as important as residents of posh localities," she says.

Sarvar Kumar, who runs a shop in Inderpuri, too, feels that the government has "forgotten" those who live on the outskirts of the constituency.

"They [politicians] do not visit us even during the elections to seek votes," he says.



BJP's Meenakshi Lekhi defeated Congress's Ajay Maken in 2014, who won the seat in 2004 and 2009. Lekhi retained the seat by beating Maken again in 2019.

The Lok Sabha seat has unauthorised colonies with irregular water supply and areas where lawns are adorned with flowers imported from other countries. FILE PHOTO

SOURCE: CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, DELHI

Known for areas like Chanakyapuri, Connaught Place, Khan Market, it also has Zamrudpur, Inderpuri, among others

Atul Mishra, a businessman, says the area close to Naraina is dotted by dilapidated roads but nobody listens to them.

"The area MP has not paid any attention to our complaints," he says.

Centre lauded

However, on the contrary, upscale Hailey Road resident Sameeksha Khurrana lauds the BJP-led Union government for the initiatives undertaken in the constituency.

"The area is overall clean and green, garbage trucks come regularly to pick trash and if there are any big concerns, they are solved within a few days," she says.

The other major concern for area residents is skyrocketing rents. According to a broker, Madhab Debnath, the rent for a two-bedroom flat has shot up to ₹4-5 lakh per month in areas such as Chankyapuri and Malcha Marg. In Greater Kailash and R.K. Puram, it is hovering around ₹1.5 lakh per month for a similar accommodation.

Even in "not-so-posh localities" such as Shadipur, Naraina and Munirka, it ranges between ₹20,000-40,000 per month.

EAR to the GROUND

High-profile seat

The constituency has in the past been represented by stalwarts like former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani. It has 10 Assembly segments - Karol Bagh, Patel Nagar, Moti Nagar, Delhi Cantonment, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Kasturba Marg, Malviya Nagar, R.K. Puram, and Greater Kailash.

The New Delhi Assembly seat is represented by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. This Lok Sabha election, BJP's Bansuri Swaraj is pitted against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and INDIA bloc candidate Somnath Bharti. Both candidates are lawyers by profession.

While Ms. Swaraj will be looking to take forward the legacy of her mother, the late BJP leader and former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj, Mr. Bharti is banking on his work as a legislator.

While the seat was bagged by the BJP in the last two general elections, all 10 Assembly segments are represented by the AAP legislators.

However, there are several Assembly segments in the Lok Sabha constituency such as Delhi Cantonment and R.K. Puram that had witnessed low turnout in the last two Lok Sabha elections.

Imran Ahmed, 52, says he is "indifferent" to whoever rules at the Centre despite area residents just a week away from electing their Lok Sabha representative.

Mr. Ahmed, who lives in Delhi Cantonment, is mulling over not voting this time.

"This is another form of NOTA [None of the Above Option]. People like me have developed an indifferent attitude towards the government," he says, adding that it is only uneducated people who can be "lured with promises of petty benefits".

Vikas Taneja, who runs a coaching institute in Karol Bagh, says local issues are not important when it comes to the Lok Sabha poll. "When I go to vote on May 25, I will vote keeping in mind who can keep my county safe and strengthen the economy. Local issues are for a different election," he says.

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HC upholds death penalty in law student murder case

Gopakumar K.C.
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday upheld the death sentence awarded by an Ernakulam court to Ameerul Islam, the lone convict in the 2016 case relating to the rape and murder of an LL.B. student from Perumbavoor in Ernakulam.

A Bench comprising Justices P.B. Suresh Kumar and S.Manu confirmed the verdict of the sessions court while passing a judgment dismissing the appeal of the convict and also answering a reference made by the sessions court for confirming the death sentence.

The 30-year-old law student was raped and murdered at her house in Kuruppampady, near Perumbavoor, on April 28, 2016. Ameerul Islam, a migrant worker from Assam, was arrested 49 days later.

The Bench observed that it was a cold-blooded murder without provocation, for the only sin committed by the victim was that she resisted the attempt of the accused to rape her.

The crime committed is in the nature of extreme brutality, that shocks the conscience of society.

When the attempts made by the accused to commit rape on the victim was resisted continuously by her, the accused out of frustration and vengeance not only inflicted on the victim several stab injuries causing her death, but also mutilated her genital organ brutally and barbarously.

A.P. SIT finds lapses in investigation of poll violence cases

The police have filed 33 cases in Palnadu, Anantapur and Tirupati; SIT chief says 1,370 people had been involved in violence, 124 arrested

Rajulapudi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA

Chaotic scenes: A curfew-like situation in Tadipatri town of Anantapur during the post-poll violence. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The 13-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) that probed the violence that occurred on May 13, the day of polling, and the following days identified many lapses in the investigation of the cases, which affected law and order in the State.

The sub-teams of the SIT identified several lapses, and instructed the investigation officers to ensure compliance at the earliest.

The police registered 33 cases in Palnadu, Anantapur and Tirupati districts on May 13 and after. The highest number of 22 cases were registered in Palnadu district followed by seven in Anantapur.

The State government constituted the SIT, headed by Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Special Investigation Bureau (SIB), Vineet Brijlal, to investigate the poll-related violence.

The team was asked to submit its report within 48 hours, for submission to the Election Commission.

Four teams, including two in Palnadu, and one each in Tirupati and Anantapur districts, were deployed. The SIT officers, who camped in the respective districts, visited the scene of offences, interacted with the aggrieved persons, investigation officers, and witnesses, besides inquiring with the police about the status of the investigation of the cases.

Mr. Brijlal and the Superintendent of Police, Rama Devi, submitted a 150-page report to the Director-General of Police (DGP), Harish Kumar Gupta, at the State Police Headquarters at Mangalagiri, near here, on Monday.

"In all, 1,370 persons were involved in the violent incidents in the three districts, of which 731 were identified and 124 accused were arrested so far. About 1,152 were yet to be arrested," said the SIT chief.

The police are making efforts to identify about 639 accused, and notices have been served on 94 accused under Section 41(A) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Mr. Brijlal said.

"SIT noticed that many of these offences are extremely serious in nature, as multitudes of miscreants participated in the violence in groups, and threw stones indiscriminately, which led to serious injuries and could have caused death," the officers said in the report.

After discussing the SIT findings, Mr. Harish Kumar Gupta directed the IGPs, DIGs and the SPs concerned to complete the investigation in all the cases at the earliest and take further action.

Party respects Babasaheb... I am here because of the Constitution: BJP's North West Delhi candidate

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Yogender Chandoliya feels there is no merit in the Opposition's charge that the party is against the ideas of B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the committee that drafted the Constitution.

"If any party has given due respect to Babasaheb Ambedkar and space to Dalit leaders, it is the BJP. I am here only because of Ambedkar's Constitution," says Mr. Chandoliya, who is fighting from the reserved North West Delhi seat.

The 61-year-old former Mayor of the erstwhile North Delhi Municipal Corporation also refers to the remarks made by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal last week. Addressing a roadshow in north-west Delhi's Jahangirpuri on May 15, Mr. Kejriwal had said, "The BJP wants 400 seats to accomplish some big things. What are these 'big things'? They want to end reservations." Similar comments have also been made by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

"Kejriwal and Rahul Gandhi are only instigating people on caste lines," he says.

"There has been no bigger leader in the country than Ambedkar and it was the Congress that disrespected him by not awarding him a Bharat Ratna," he adds.

Fact file

- **Assets** (including wife's)
  - **Movable:** ₹61.23 lakh
  - **Immovable:** ₹2.15 crore
- **Liabilities:** ₹9.38 lakh
- **Education:** BA, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, U.P.
- **Criminal cases:** Booked in two cases for offences, including rioting and obstructing public servant in the discharge of public functions. Both cases are pending in court

People want more community centres, parks, and swimming pools. I will deliver them after winning the election
YOGENDER CHANDOLIYA
BJP's North West Delhi candidate

Mr. Chandoliya is up against Udit Raj, who won the seat on a BJP ticket in 2014 and joined the Congress five years later. Delhi will vote on May 25.

PM's appeal

Speaking at the end of a day full of roadshows and public events, which culminated with him addressing an event that aimed at encouraging women entrepreneurs, Mr. Chandoliya says he is confident of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal among the voters.

"People on the ground are speaking only about Modi*ji*. I have no doubt that I will win," he says.

Mr. Chandoliya, born and raised in Delhi, is fighting his seventh election. Like his father, he too lost his debut election.

"My father contested his first election as a councillor-nominee from the BJP in 1983. I grew up with politics around me. When I was 15, I used to go to the 'shakha' (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh branch). In college, I joined the ABVP (RSS's student wing)," he says.

His own journey into mainstream politics started in 1998, when he fought the Assembly election on a

Meet your CANDIDATE

BJP ticket. He won the civic elections thrice – in 2002, 2007, and 2012 – and went on to serve as the unified civic body's Standing Committee chairman. He fought the Assembly elections again – in 2015 and 2019 – albeit unsuccessfully, and is now contesting his maiden parliamentary poll.

Mr. Chandoliya says his father instilled in him values that have seen him through the highs and lows of his nearly three-decade-long career. However, he credits all his achievements to his grandfather.

"My grandfather lost his parents to the plague in Rajasthan and came to Delhi with hardly anything. Yet he worked hard and brought us up. I am fighting the election because he fought and struggled hard, and survived," says the BJP nominee.

Mr. Chandoliya says doing politics, or "*sewa* (service)" as he terms it, which he learnt from his father, will not be passed on to his children.

"*Humari rajniti sewa ka kaam hai. Agar ghar ke do aadmi sewa karenge, toh ghar chalayega kaun* (Our politics is doing service. If two persons in the house do service, who will run the house)?" he adds.

The BJP nominee says voters in North West Delhi feel that it has not been developed as much as Delhi's other constituencies.

"There were plans to extend the metro to several parts of this side of the city, but the Delhi government did not take these proposals forward. Not enough buses ply here and urban villages still don't have access to proper amenities, such as clean drinking water," he says.

"People here also want more community centres, parks, and swimming pools. And I will deliver them after winning the election," he says.

Cong. will win at least 15 LS seats in Karnataka, says Siddaramaiah

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said that the Congress would win at least 15 of the 28 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

"We will win a minimum of 15 seats and the maximum will be 20 seats," he said, while addressing a meet-the-press programme organised by the Press Club of Bengaluru to mark the completion of the first year of the Congress government.

"We are not claiming like the BJP that we are going to emerge victorious in all 28 Lok Sabha constituencies," he said.

The BJP and the JD(S) formed an alliance and contested 25 and three seats, respectively.

On the possibility of a Cabinet reshuffle after the Lok Sabha results, the CM said there was no plan before him on that. However, the decision would be taken on the directions of the party high command, he said.

Earlier, the CM spelled out the government's one-year achievements, and said all the five guarantees had been implemented as promised by the party in its poll manifesto in 2023. The government would continue all the five guarantees for the full five-year term.

On allegation that the State government had taken away some percentage of reservation from the OBCs and given it to Muslims, he said Muslims had been given 4% reservation in government jobs and admissions in educational institutions.

Prajwal must return home, cooperate with probe: Kumaraswamy

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

H.D. Kumaraswamy

With the Prajwal Revanna sexual abuse case taking new twists every day, Janata Dal(S) State president and former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Monday appealed to the Hassan MP to return and subject himself to the legal process. This is the first time that such an appeal has been made by the family.

Addressing presspersons a day after another audio clip – a purported conversation between former MP L.R. Shivarame Gowda and BJP leader Devaraje Gowda – went viral, Mr. Kumaraswamy said: "If you have any respect for our family and to our elders (referring to his father H.D. Deve Gowda), I appeal to you through the media to return from whichever country you are in and cooperate with the Special Investigation Team in the probe. There should be no fear. The law of this land will take its own course. How long can this hide-and-seek game be played? I appeal to you with folded hands to surrender within 48 hours."

Asserting that Mr. Deve Gowda was pained by this episode, the former Chief Minister said that his father wanted to resign as member of the Rajya Sabha.

JD(S) leader Revanna gets bail in sexual abuse case

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Janata Dal(S) leader and former Karnataka Minister H.D. Revanna was granted bail on Monday in the sexual harassment case registered against him at the Holenarsipur town police station in April.

Last week, a Bengaluru court had given him interim bail till Monday.

The court gave him bail on Monday. It directed Mr. Revanna to deposit an amount of ₹5 lakh and provide two sureties.

He was booked for sexual harassment under Sections 354A and 354D of the IPC on April 28, based on a complaint by a former domestic help. Both Mr. Revanna and his son Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna were accused in the case.

APPOINTMENT

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(Entrance Examination - 14th July 2024)

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Eligibility: A candidate should have passed the full Time Graduate degree examination in Science (12th + 3 years degree entire 5 years in science only) with Physics/Chemistry/Mathematics, Microbiology or Biochemistry as the main subject or one of them as second subject in the three year degree or Agriculture / Food Science/ Polymer Science or Engineering / Technology degree from AICTE recognized University with minimum second class.

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Eligibility: A candidate should have passed the full time (not by correspondence or part time) Graduate degree in Engineering & Technology or four year graduate in science.

Important Dates
Last Date of Submission of filled application Form : 10th July 2024
(Online/Offline mode)
Entrance Exam (IIPCET): 14th July 2024
(Offline Mode at Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Bangalore Centre)

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Candidates can visit the IIP website: www.iip-in.com and submit the application form through online/offline mode for PGDP and M.S.

A closer contest

Women voters seem to hold the key as elections reach the business end

The fifth phase of the general election, held on Monday, featured contests in the fewest number of seats – 49. But it included heavyweight seats such as Rae Bareli, Amethi and Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh, the urban areas of Mumbai, Thane and Nashik in Maharashtra, the southern parts of West Bengal, which saw strong contests between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in 2019, besides simultaneous Assembly and parliamentary polls in the south-western seats of Odisha. In Maharashtra, the splintering of the main regional parties has made it a battleground State along with Bihar, Karnataka and West Bengal. Voter turnout in Maharashtra was relatively low when compared to the rest of the country, with Mumbai retaining its unfavourable reputation of voter apathy. The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction counts these seats as some of its strongholds and its alliance's performance here might well decide the course of the battle now as well as in the Assembly elections later this year. The Maha Vikas Aghadi-Mahayuti contest of coalitions has upended the traditional patterns of support bases for the extant parties in the State and this election could herald a new correlation of forces.

In U.P., the Opposition has managed to keep the contest going on issues related to livelihoods and has prevented it being a cakewalk for the BJP which has sought to use the Ram Mandir consecration issue to register another near-sweep. The Opposition's focus is expected to give it a bigger fillip in Bihar, where Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav's relentless campaigning on employment issues has made the elections even more competitive. The BJP now seeks to bank on its record in welfare delivery, expecting the support of poorer voters and women. Voter turnout in the fifth phase is in line with the trends seen in the fourth phase in U.P., which registered better numbers than phases two and three, while preliminary trends in Bihar indicate a slight reduction compared to the previous phase. The turnout has in general been marginally lower than what it was in 2019 across the country. In Odisha and West Bengal too, women voters could be crucial in deciding the fortunes of the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the TMC. While turnout was relatively low in Odisha, West Bengal registered close to 73%, according to early numbers. Women outvoted men in West Bengal significantly till phase four and the TMC would be encouraged as it banks on its women-centric welfare measures to overcome the BJP's formidable challenge. The BJD would hope that its work in mobilising women through self-help groups will continue to yield it strong support, especially in rural areas.

Death of a President

Change at the helm comes at a time of domestic and regional uncertainties

The death of Iran's eighth President, Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran amid bad weather has sent shockwaves across West Asia. Raisi and others, including local officials, were travelling to Tabriz after inaugurating a dam with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, on the countries' shared border when his chopper went down in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. Raisi, a conservative cleric, rose to power in 2021 after eight years of rule by moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who signed the 2015 nuclear deal with the U.S. and other world powers. Mr. Rouhani's promise of change and prosperity through dialogue did not materialise as the then U.S. President, Donald Trump sabotaged the deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran. When moderates lost their face and morale, the conservatives tightened their grip on the state through Raisi. A confidant of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Raisi escalated a crackdown on civil rights at home, strengthened Iran's ties with Russia and China, doubled down on its support for non-state militias such as Hamas and Hezbollah and expanded Iran's nuclear programme. In three years, he emerged as one of Iran's most powerful men and was seen as a potential successor to Mr. Khamenei.

The death of the President could not have come at a worse time for Iran. It is already struggling to stabilise a stricken economy, battered by U.S.-imposed sanctions, and trying to calm social tensions. The nuclear deal remains dead and West Asia is on fire. In April, Raisi oversaw an unprecedented attack on Israel following Israel's strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. Israel's meek response avoided an all-out war but tensions remained high. In recent years, Iran has also lost key officials. In the deaths of Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian, the Islamic Republic has lost an experienced, crisis-hardened cleric administrator and a seasoned diplomat. It is understandable that Iran would need time to get over the shock that it is in now. Given the geopolitical tensions, Raisi's death could also fuel conspiracy theories, which could further inflame the region. So, it is imperative for Iran to get to the bottom of the crash. Another priority is that the transition to a new presidency is handled smoothly. First Vice-President Mohammed Mokhber will assume interim presidential powers and the country is expected to hold a presidential election within 50 days. A change in presidency is unlikely to alter Iran's foreign policy direction, but the loss of one of the most experienced and ideologically disciplined defenders of the revolution and a transition amid domestic and regional uncertainties, is an added challenge to the Islamic Republic.

Critical times call for strong judicial adjudication

Kaleeswaram Raj
is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India

The Supreme Court of India will, sooner or later, consider the question whether the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the rules under it can pass constitutional scrutiny. That the recently promulgated CAA Rules are unclear about the fate of the applicants whose request for citizenship is turned down has aggravated concerns over the issue. There is also a fear that persons whose applications are disallowed might end up in detention centres. Some of the petitioners before the Court have also raised concerns over dual citizenship to foreign applicants who need not have to abandon their original citizenship. This would create uncertainty in the matter of citizenship, as it goes against the spirit of the parent Act, it is pointed out.

Interdicting a statute or set of statutory rules is not a routine exercise undertaken by the constitutional courts. Generally, a law made by Parliament is presumed to be valid unless it is shown to have ostensibly breached constitutional provisions. The law presumes that, normally, malice cannot be attributed to a process of legislation (*Manish Kumar vs Union Of India*, 2021). In *Gurudevdatta Vksss Maryadit and Ors. vs State Of Maharashtra and Ors* (2001), the Supreme Court said that "legislative malice is beyond the pale of jurisdiction of the law courts...."

The lack of interdiction

This conventional wisdom, however, is incapable of addressing the contemporary challenges posed by populist regimes across the world, which often invoke motivated or targeted legislation. Such dispensations also manipulate the electoral system or process by legislative means. This recent legislative trend calls for an advanced and assertive juridical approach. Refusing to interdict the operation of such enactments, by adhering to an obsolete presumption regarding validity of the law would severely diminish the counter-majoritarian role which constitutional courts are supposed to play in critical times.

Every piece of legislation is a political statement. A regime that does not believe in the idea of constitutional democracy would naturally enact laws with scant regard to the scheme of the Constitution. On such occasions, a sense of judicial euphoria about the 'validity' of the laws has precluded the Supreme Court from interdicting the operation of laws. The absence of an order of stay against demonetisation has allowed the tragedy to happen and by the time the case was decided in *Vivek Narayan Sharma vs Union of India* (2023), the situation was totally irreversible. The lack of interdiction of the dilution of Kashmir's special status has also made the litigation almost a *fait accompli*, as one finds in the judgment *In Re Article 370 of the Constitution of India* (2023).

Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India (2023) was a radical judgment by the Constitution Bench of the top court that called for an independent body to select the Election Commission of India (ECI), with no predominance for the executive of the day. But, recently, the Centre promulgated the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. This Act revived the earlier position of the "Prime Minister's Committee" choosing the ECI. It comprises the Prime Minister, a Minister chosen by him and the Opposition Leader in the Lok Sabha, whose presence is inconsequential for all practical purposes. Appointments were made based on the new law.

The law was challenged in *Jaya Thakur vs Union of India* (2024). The Court, however, refused to prevent the operation and implementation of the statute based on "presumption" of its validity. This is not a targeted legislation, but an enactment, which, on the face of it, is unconstitutional. The statute threatens the very foundation of our democracy, of which free and fair elections are a basic feature. This is an illustrative case where the Court failed to protect its own judgment, essentially on account of the judicial superstition regarding the presumption of validity of the enactment. It is no wonder that in the general election 2024, the commissions and omissions by the ECI on several occasions remain questionable.

> The process of judicial review should be strong, immediate, and unambiguous in the case of statutes that are obviously unconstitutional or divisive

A case of targeted legislation

The CAA and the rules under it, on the other hand, clearly fall within the category of targeted legislation. Legislative malice is writ large in the law. The law classifies people in the name of religion and excludes Muslims from the process for grant of citizenship.

Another prominent example of targeted legislation is the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act (2019), which criminalised instant triple *talaq*. Significantly, the act of instant triple *talaq* had been invalidated by the Supreme Court in *Shayara Bano* (2017) and, therefore, there was no legal requirement to 'criminalise' an act which was *non est* in the eye of law. The statute only motivated the 'clever' husbands to resort to other means of divorce or to simply desert their wives, to get rid of the penal consequences. Thus, the law, which was aimed against the Muslim community, evidently did not come to the rescue of Muslim women. Often, it did the opposite. The enactment was however 'successful' in its divisive agenda. Anti-conversion laws in certain States in the country also followed suit.

An example in the U.S.

In the United States too, the conventional view did not favour judicial nullification of statutes on the ground of malice. John Hart Ely stated that the Constitution cannot be used as "an instrument for punishing the evil thoughts of members of the political branches". But evil thoughts of the majority in the legislative bodies are a harsh contemporary reality. Therefore, motivated legislations should call for a more rigorous judicial scrutiny. Scholar Susannah W. Pollvogt correctly writes that "*animus* can never constitute a legitimate state interest for purposes of equal protection analysis". By referring to the judgment in *United States Dept. of Agriculture vs Moreno, 413 U.S. 528* (1973), she said that the enactment to exclude "hippies" from collective residential rights implies a "desire to harm" a particular group and therefore reflects discrimination (Unconstitutional Animus, Fordham Law Review, 2012).

There are Indian precedents where the Supreme Court has effectively interdicted operation of parliamentary legislations. In *Ashoka Kumar Thakur vs Union of India* (2007), regarding the prescription of 27% quota for Other Backward Community (OBC) candidates to professional colleges, the Court initially issued a judicial injunction. The Court's order of stay in the case of the three contentious farm laws in *Rakesh Vaishnav vs Union of India* (2021) is another example. The Court in that case effectively prevented the implementation of the farm laws which the Centre had to withdraw ultimately following farmers' protest.

As regarding the statutes which are glaringly unconstitutional or divisive, the process of judicial review should be strong, immediate, and unambiguous. The top court should be able to learn from its track record and understand the political consequences of its insensitivity during critical times. Delay often defeats the purpose of constitutional adjudication. Time is the essence of judicial review when it comes to malicious and unconstitutional laws.

Another crash, another high-profile passenger

Captain A. (Mohan) Ranganathan
is a former airline instructor pilot and aviation safety adviser. He is also a former member of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council (CASAC), India

The fatal crash, on May 19, 2024, of a Bell 212 helicopter flying the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, is one more accident involving high-profile passengers, in mountainous terrain and in very poor visibility. One hopes people learn from these.

Given the increased tensions in West Asia and the gung-ho attitude of Israel, with open American support, suspicion will be raised about the Israeli hand. Tel Aviv has denied this and distanced itself from the crash, but neither the United States nor Israel have any credibility left for the world to accept their innocence without serious cross-checks.

Was the Iranian President's plan known earlier? Was the flight arranged for some urgent meeting? And was the President informed about the dangerous weather conditions?

Pressure on crew

There have been a number of fatal crashes involving very very important persons (VVIPs). On September 2, 2009, a Bell helicopter crash claimed the life of the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy. The copter crashed in the hills near Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, in poor visibility conditions, killing all on board. Mr. Reddy had been proceeding to a political meeting. As is the norm in accident investigation reports in India, the truth was hidden and the pilots blamed.

> The Iran helicopter crash spotlights the importance of allowing the crew to operate unhindered and ensuring flight safety

On December 8, 2021, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, and his entourage died in an Indian Air Force Mi-17 helicopter crash near Coonoor, Tamil Nadu. Here again, it was hilly terrain and in fog. Gen. Rawat had the option of travelling by road but had insisted on flying. Did the crew point out the danger due to foggy weather? We will never get to know as accidents involving the armed forces are hushed up.

Why do pilots let themselves be arm-twisted into flying in weather conditions that are dangerous? They are the ones who are trained to fly in all weather conditions. The passengers have no knowledge of weather conditions, even if one were to brief them. They have an agenda to fulfil. Very few politicians will take inputs from pilots.

It is not just the crew of helicopters with VVIPs who cave into pressure. On April 10, 2010, the aircraft carrying the President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, and his wife, Maria, crashed in fog killing 96 people. They were flying to a programme to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the massacre near Smolensk in Russia. The investigative agencies from Poland and Russia concluded that the pilots had made the approach in unsafe conditions. The pilots had made the approach in thick fog and the aircraft descended below the normal approach path, hit trees, rolled over and crashed in wooded area short of the runway.

If one were to go back to crashes in India, highlighted above, the similarity is visible, except that the Polish craft was an aircraft.

Weather and judgement

In fog and heavy rain, the visual illusions are plenty and depth perception induced by rainwater flowing down the aircraft/helicopter windscreen makes a huge impact. Several accidents have been caused due to misjudgements induced by optical illusions. Navigation in poor visibility has become easier with the use of the Global Positioning System (GPS) with an accuracy as close as a metre. The accuracy takes a hit if one uses a different system where the datum shifts. Military aircraft, to avoid enemy interception or identification, tweak the system. Worldwide, it is the WGS 84 which is the base datum. The Indian Air Force uses a system called EVER-MD. Datum shift can result in an error of between 10 metres and 3,000m. The Balakot fiasco, which is denied vigorously by the Indian Air Force but confirmed to be a miss by world organisations with very accurate sightings, was caused by the position input based on one datum and the missiles using the co-ordinates based on the WGS 84.

Attitude to safety, a contrast

In the U.S., the most dangerous airfield in foggy conditions is Aspen in Colorado. Pilots require special training. On March 29, 2001, a Gulfstream Avjet charter flight crashed while on the steep approach in poor visibility conditions. The investigation showed that the crew were under pressure by the owner to fly even though a Federal Aviation Administration official had advised against the flight. Because of the findings and transparent report, such accidents do not recur.

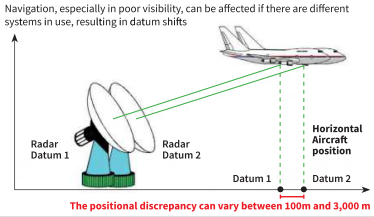
We have had several accidents, both fatal as well as hull losses without fatalities. Many of them have had pilots making similar errors, and blatant violation of rules by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority of India and airlines. Yet, we turn a blind eye to aviation safety. It is a pity we have a judiciary whose understanding of aviation safety is so poor.

Finally, there are questions that arise out of the Iran crash.

The helicopter was U.S. made. Due to sanctions, were any vital components of the navigation equipment or parts denied to Iran? Israel may deny its involvement, but can it be trusted? Will the U.S. agencies confirm that neither Israel or U.S. agencies are not involved? Will those in power, worldwide, leave the decision on flight safety to the pilots who operate the flight? Decisions about a flight by the pilot should never be overruled by a person on board, irrespective of his or her rank. It takes just a few seconds of delayed action induced by stress and fatigue to court disaster. It is sad that several top officials, including the President of a country, have died in the crash. The collateral damage is the loss of lives of innocent fellow passengers and the crew. One hopes that better sense prevails on leaders.

Flight path accuracy and different systems

Navigation, especially in poor visibility, can be affected if there are different systems in use, resulting in datum shifts



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ebrahim Raisi

In the passing of Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi, and also its Foreign Minister, there is bound to be suspicion. Tehran's relations with Israel are certain to be more strained than before. However, for India it is a matter of concern as the relationship between India and Iran was getting strengthened, as reflected in the signing of the agreement on the Chabahar port.

A.G. Rajmohan,
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

The death of President Raisi is in the midst of the unrest in West Asia. This would also focus the spotlight on the U.S. given its constant (political) interference. With the near direct and ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel, the U.S. has to tread with caution now. Its every assistance to Israel here onwards will be seen as moves to leverage the leadership vacuum caused by Raisi's absence. Given the uncertainty over the bent of the incoming new leadership in Iran, the U.S. needs great sagacity to avoid a sharp flare-up in an already volatile region. U.S. President Joe Biden has an opportunity to prove his own mettle as also the pre-eminence of his nation, that too in an election year.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Urban voter apathy

The major cities in the country, often labelled as vibrant hubs of diversity and progress, have consistently grappled with record-low voter turnouts in local body, Assembly and parliamentary elections. This lethargy needs to be condemned. It proves that people in the city talk much but vote less. Urban voter apathy has serious implications for any democracy.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao,
Hyderabad

Revisiting the Railway strike of 1974

Robert Rahman Raman

is a labour historian with a PhD from CeMIS, University of Goettingen. Views expressed are personal

The year 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the railway workers' general strike, a monumental event in the history of organised labour in India. This general strike, a remarkable display of working-class unity, was unparalleled in its geographical spread and public involvement. Faced with gruelling work conditions, diminishing wages and bonuses, and soaring prices of essential goods and oil, exacerbated by a meagre wage hike proposed by the Third Pay Commission, the railway workers decided to go on a general strike on May 8. The strike, however, began unexpectedly when more than a million railway workers deserted their posts across India following the arrest of George Fernandes, president of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, at Lucknow on May 1. The station masters of Victoria Terminus sealed its gates in the early hours of May 2, thereby challenging the ruling government and asserting their authority over a symbolic and physical unifier of the nation.

Bringing life to a standstill

Despite the initial lack of coordination, the strike swiftly brought normal life to a standstill in all the major cities. It halted the railway system, disrupting train movement across the country. There was not a single major railway centre that was not shut down or severely affected. The strike was all-encompassing in the metropolitan centres, and along with the long-distance passenger trains, the suburban services were also immobilised. In Bombay, a general strike was called in solidarity, bringing the city to a grinding halt. All the major railway towns with a substantial population of railway workers, such as Jamalpur, Perambur, Mughalsarai, and Kharagpur, emerged as the strongholds of the strike. Despite the Railway Board and the government's assertions, the railway system was thrown into disarray for over three weeks. One of the striking features of the general strike was the pivotal role played by the railway workers' families, especially women. In Delhi, they went around railway residential colonies, painting the faces of strikebreakers with vermilion and forcing them to put on bangles. They demonstrated outside local police stations and gheraoed them against the arrest of railway workers and blocked tracks to prevent train services.

The railway workers' tenacity to continue with the strike was met by unprecedented violence by the incumbent government. Besides declaring the strike illegal under the Defence of India rules, the government mobilised police and paramilitary forces to maintain train services, arrest union leaders, and intimidate workers. At most stations, the security forces outnumbered passengers and striking workers. As many as 50,000 railway workers were arrested during the strike; 10,000 were put behind bars within the first 24 hours. More than 30,000 families were evicted from the railway colonies. Railway colonies of Mughalsarai, Jamalpur, Jhansi and other important towns emerged as the centre of this brutal repression. Police and paramilitary forces frequently raided and ransacked homes, threatened eviction, and harassed workers and their families to coerce them to resume work. These military-style operations, which confronted the workers and their families as enemies rather than protesting citizens, marked a new authoritarian turn by the government, which culminated in the Emergency of 1975. Although the strike mobilised the workers, under the weight of unparalleled state repression and financial hardship, the strikers had to capitulate, and the general strike was formally called off on May 27.

> In retrospect, the response to the strike has often been seen as a dress rehearsal for the Emergency declared the following year

A dress rehearsal

In retrospect, the response to the strike has often been seen as a dress rehearsal for the Emergency declared the following year. While the political implications of the strike must be acknowledged, considering it merely as a political campaign used by the opposition to discredit the government would be a gross simplification of the workers' motivation and collective will to carry out the campaign. The strike grew out of the railway workers' bid to address their two-decade-long grievances, which were neglected by the government and the industrial relation machinery of grievance redressal through collective actions. The general strike was a unique event, not just because it challenged the government's ability to govern; its significance further lay in the rank-and-file militancy it inspired and the wider solidarity it weaved among the railway workers, who were divided into innumerable categories and fragmented labour regimes. The impetus for the general strike came from these independent unions, not recognised ones. One of the lasting legacies of the strike was the workers' assertiveness in exercising power in their own organisations for the redressal of their grievances, thus turning the union into a site of struggle as much as an instrument of struggle.

While the strike was withdrawn unconditionally, it would be a mistake to call it a complete defeat. Once the Janata government came to power, a substantial number of casual and regular employees dismissed during the strike were reinstated. Railway workers ensured that the government accepted their demand for a bonus. Today, railway workers face similar precarity due to the pension scheme's scrapping, Railways' privatisation, increasing work casualisation, and the adverse recommendation of the Seventh Pay Commission. Various trade unions and federations of Indian Railways have again come together to resist these assaults. In the context of these renewed attacks on labour, the strike of 1974 remains relevant as a struggle.

A State without a capital yet

With leaders busy in vendetta politics, the people of Andhra still have no capital

STATE OF PLAY

P. Sujatha Varma
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Just days before the deadline of June 2, 2024, the day when Hyderabad will cease to be the joint capital of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the political class in residual Andhra Pradesh maintains a stoic silence on the issue of choosing a capital.

As per Section 5 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, Hyderabad will be the common capital of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for a period not exceeding 10 years with effect from June 2, 2014, the official date of the bifurcation of the combined State. The 10-year window period was given to the residual State of Andhra Pradesh to build its own capital. But Andhra Pradesh continues to be where it had started. The tragedy is that the presidents of the incumbent YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) have been pulling in different directions on the issue.

The first five years post bifurcation were marked by hullabaloo over a "world class futuristic and smart capital" at Amaravati for Andhra Pradesh. This was generated by N. Chandrababu Naidu, who was Chief Minister then. To build a "people's capital", estimated at ₹51,000 crore in 2015, Mr. Naidu acquired 33,000 acres of land from farmers through land-pooling and promised to make them a partner in the capital development plan. He roped in Singapore-based firms and paid them thousands of crores to build the project. He also pooled ₹7,500 crore from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, a couple of hundred crores from the World Bank, and ₹1,500 crore from the Union government.

But in the 2019 elections, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP came to power. The new Chief Minister stalled all the projects and slashed the budget of the new capital to ₹500 crore. This resulted in the withdrawal of the World Bank and the Singapore firms from the project. Amaravati now looks like a ghost capital.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy's plan to decentralise development by establishing three capitals in the State has run into legal issues; the case is pending in the Supreme Court.

The people of the State blame both the Chief Ministers for being insensitive to their emotions and problems in the last 10 years. They also accuse the Congress of letting them down by implementing the bifurcation process in the most unscientific manner. It brings to their mind grim memories of the bifurcation Bill being passed without any discussions in Parliament, the mics in the Lok Sabha being switched off, the live telecast of the proceedings being stopped, and members opposing the Bill being forced out of the House by the marshals. The people feel that development in the State has taken a back seat even as leaders indulge in vendetta politics.

Though Hyderabad was declared the joint capital of Andhra Pradesh for 10 years, Mr. Naidu operated from there only for a year before moving to Vijayawada. Many people attribute his hurried shifting to his fear of an imminent arrest in the cash-for-vote scam that broke out in 2015. Some political experts feel that Hyderabad would have probably become Andhra Pradesh's permanent capital, much like how Chandigarh is the capital of Punjab and Haryana, if Mr. Naidu had stayed in the city for 10 years.

In view of the looming deadline of June 2, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has set the ball rolling for completing the distribution of assets and liabilities between the two States, a contentious issue which has been pending due to lack of consensus. After many rounds of bilateral meetings failed to address the issue, Andhra Pradesh moved the Supreme Court seeking a 'fair' division of assets and liabilities between the two States. A total of 245 institutions with a fixed asset value of ₹1.42 lakh crore are at stake. Of them, 91 come under Schedule IX and 142 under Schedule X of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act. The division of another 12 institutions, not mentioned in the Act, has also become contentious.

The leaders of Andhra Pradesh are apprehensive about the Congress government in Telangana doing a fair job of the distribution process. They feel that even if Mr. Revanth Reddy makes any attempt to sort out the tangle, the Opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi is bound to target him by whipping up the Telangana welfare issue again.

On the capital, there is still no clarity. Whichever party comes to power this election must address the issue; they owe it to the people.

Flight cancellations affected 1.5 lakh people since Dec. 2023

After the COVID-19 lockdowns and jet fuel hikes, aviation firms are now grappling with crew troubles

DATA POINT

Rhythanya, Sherin R., and Niha Thasneem R.

Since December 2023, hundreds of cancellations and poor on-time performance of airlines have left thousands of people stranded at airports across India. Between March 31 and April 3 this year, 150 Vistara flights were cancelled and 200 flights were delayed by more than two hours. On May 8, Air India Express cancelled 90 of its 360 flights. Similar cancellations, though not at this scale, were recorded across many large airlines at various points this year.

The recent crisis to hit the aviation industry is fuelled by the unavailability of crew. In the case of Air India Express, about 200 cabin crew reported "sick". In the case of Vistara too, crew unavailability was cited as the reason. There has been a mismatch between demand and supply of crew amid the expansion of the network.

The new troubles have come just as the aviation industry has started shrugging off the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in record losses for all airlines. During the first few months of the pandemic, in 2020, passenger flow came to a halt as airlines were grounded. In later months, passenger flow trickled in as airlines had to follow pandemic-related protocols. Despite that, airlines continued to pay salaries, airport fees, and aircraft and engine rentals and thus faced heavy losses. Later in 2022, when passenger flow returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, aviation fuel prices shot up. Airlines continued to suffer since passing on the fuel price to customers was not an option.

Chart 1 shows the cancellation rate of various airlines month-wise in the January 2022-March 2024 period. The bigger and darker the box, the higher the cancellation rate. In January 2024, 5% of IndiGo's flights, 3.4% of SpiceJet's flights, and about 2% of Air India's flights were cancelled. Even in the month prior, cancellations ranged between 1% and 2% for these airlines.

While the cancellation rate may statistically appear insignificant, the absolute number of passengers affected even when 1-2% flights get cancelled in a month is staggering. For instance, in the four months between December 2023 and March 2024, 1.5 lakh passengers couldn't travel due to cancellations. **Chart 2** shows the number of passengers affected by cancellations. When an airline with a significantly higher number of scheduled flights cancels even 1% of its flights, the number of passengers affected too is considerably higher. which explains the bigger boxes for IndiGo. In total, since January 2022, 6.5 lakh passengers have been affected by cancellations.

Cancellations result in a demand for refunds by passengers. Data show that the refund process has not been smooth. **Chart 3** shows complaints about refunds as a share of total complaints received by airlines month-wise in the January 2022-March 2024 period. In 2022, across many months, over 25% of the total complaints were about refunds. In 2023 and 2024, this share reduced to 15%, which is commendable given the high number of cancellations. But problems persist.

The on-time performance of airlines has also been drastically falling in the past two years. **Chart 4** shows the on-time performance of airlines, based on data from the Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Mumbai airports. The figure in the chart corresponds to the % of on-time (with some margin) landings and take-offs. In December 2023, the on-time performance of all major airlines fell to the lowest level in two years (SpiceJet: 30%, Air India: 47.6%, IndiGo: 60%). The poor on-time performance continued in 2024 as well. In the last two years, 45 lakh passengers have been impacted by this issue.

Off the charts

The data for the charts were sourced from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation

Chart 1: The bigger the square, the higher the cancellation rate (in %) of airlines in a month

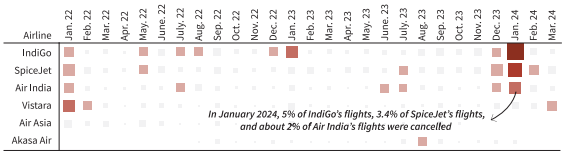


Chart 2: The bigger the square, the higher the number of passengers (absolute figures) impacted by cancellation of flights in a month

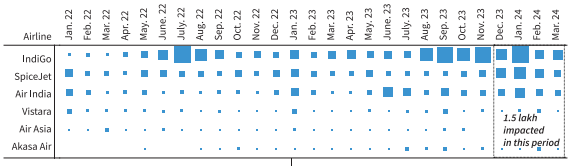


Chart 3: The chart shows complaints about refunds as a share of total complaints received by airlines month-wise

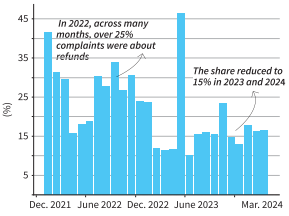
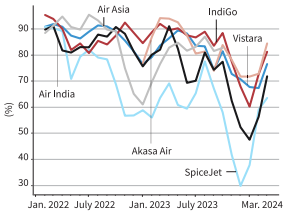


Chart 4: The chart shows the on-time performance of airlines, based on data from select airports



Rhythanya, Sherin R., and Niha Thasneem R. are interning with *The Hindu*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1974

No political motive behind timing of test, says Sethna

Bombay, May 20: Dr. H.N. Sethna, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, asserted to-day that the timing of India's first underground nuclear test had been entirely left to him by the Government of India and that there was no political motive behind it.

He told a largely attended news conference here that the decision to conduct the test on May 18 was his and his alone and that the Union Government had no hand in it.

Asked whether the Prime Minister had asked him to undertake the test at this stage to divert the people's attention from the economic crisis facing the country, Dr Sethna emphatically declared: "It was my decision, I named the date." He told a questioner that the May 18 test was the first conducted by India and it turned out to be successful. No previous experiment was carried out.

"Experiments like this require a good deal of preparation," Dr. Sethna said adding that with India's logistics and communications if anybody could conduct a nuclear test at short notice "I will lose my job."

Asked how long it took to complete the preparations, he replied: "No comments."

The news conference began with presentation of bouquets to Dr Sethna and Dr R Ramanna, Director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre by newsmen on behalf of Bombay journalists as a token of appreciation of their greatest achievement.

Asked whether a nuclear experiment had been conducted on May 16 as reported by the Delhi observatory Dr Sethna clarified that explosion perhaps occurred in some other country. "Our experiment was carried out on May 16," he declared.

(The Meteorological Department in Delhi while announcing that it recorded the Saturday's nuclear explosion in Rajasthan also said that two days earlier, i.e., on May 16, it recorded an explosion the source of which it could not locate.)

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1924

Cotton in the British Empire

London, May 23: The British Cotton Growing Association's annual report states that 178 thousand bales of cotton were grown in new fields in the British Empire last year.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Net addition in EPFO membership in the month of March

14.41 lakh. Approximately 11.80 lakh members exited and subsequently rejoined the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation), according to a statement by the Ministry of Labour. PTI

Biden administration holds up the shipment of bombs

3,500 bombs. U.S. President Joe Biden said that the U.S. would not provide offensive weapons for a full-scale invasion of Rafah. However, it plans to continue with the sale of arms worth $1 billion. AP

The number of times the Nepal PM won the vote of confidence

4 In 18 months of power, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) continued to lead a coalition government amid political instability and frequent power battles between alliances. He received 157 votes in 275-member House of Representatives. PTI

Arrests made during domestic violence crackdown in Australia

554 The New South Wales police arrested and charged the state's worst domestic violence offenders over a four-day operation. This follows a spike in attacks on women, which has resulted in 28 fatalities this year. AFP

The increase in China's crude imports from Russia

30 in percentage. Russia continues being China's top oil supplier for a 12th month, as refiners continue to cash in discounted shipments. Supplies from Saudi Arabia fell a quarter on higher prices. REUTERS

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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India-China consumption comparison

While both India and China have a large consumer base, will India's burgeoning consumer class with increased spending enhance its appeal to foreign businesses as a preferred destination over China?

ECONOMIC NOTES

Amit Kumar

In 2023, India surpassed China to become the world's most populous country. The development came against the backdrop of a declining birth rate (6.4 births per 1,000 people) and total fertility rate (-1%) in China. China also recorded a negative population growth rate for the first time in six decades. This means a rising dependency ratio, which is projected to increase over time. In contrast, India's population, despite reaching replacement levels (total fertility rate of 2.1), is expected to grow and peak around 2060.

These developments have significant consequences on domestic consumption in the two countries. Consequently, it becomes imperative to compare their consumption figures and strengths/weaknesses. A cross-comparison also assumes significance owing to the contrasting experiences of the two countries in their respective geopolitical landscapes.

How do the numbers compare?

Both India and China have a large consumer base. A consumer is anyone who spends more than $12 a day, as per the Purchasing Power Parity [PPP], 2017.

Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE), which measures total consumption expenditure by households and non-profit institutions serving households on goods and services, serves as a useful proxy for consumer spending especially as income and consumption are concentrated within the consumer classes. The data reveals that as a percentage of GDP, India spends significantly more on consumption than China. While PFCE contributes more than 58% to India's GDP currently, it contributes only 38% to China's economy. Additionally, the final consumption, which also includes government consumption expenditure, constitutes 68% of the GDP for India and 53% for China. This implies that the government is a much bigger consumer in China than in India. Furthermore, while the percentage for India is steadily increasing, the same for China has been on a decline.

The aggregate data on PFCE reveals that despite China's economy being approximately five times bigger than that of India's, its PFCE amounts to relatively a lot less, only about 3.5 times that of India's. This not only means that consumption is a much larger contributor to India's GDP, but that India will equal China's consumption level at a relatively much lower GDP (-$10 trillion) as against China, which achieved the scale at approximately $17 trillion.

Secondly, despite the gloomy narrative around China's consumption, its PFCE has registered a significant increase in the past four years. Its PFCE remained rather constant in 2020 (pandemic year) before registering a huge uptick in 2021. On the other hand, India's figures have steadily increased from $1.64 trillion in 2018 to $2.10 trillion in 2022. Thirdly, in 2022, while China recorded a decline in its numbers – both aggregate ($6.6 trillion compared to $6.8 trillion) and per-capita ($4,730 compared to $4,809) – India witnessed marginal growth in both categories. Nevertheless, the difference in the expenditure between the two countries has widened from $3.8 trillion in 2018 to more than $4.5 trillion in 2022.

Finally, in terms of ratio, India's PFCE has closed the gap with China from -3.3 to -3.1. The significance of India closing the gap in terms of ratio here needs to be underlined. Usually, with a country like China that is operating on a huge base, even a marginal growth rate could inflate the aggregate numbers manifold. This would be true even if India, on the other hand, were adding expenditure at a relatively higher growth rate than China. But to beat China in terms of ratio would have required India to grow at a significantly higher rate than China, which it did. In terms of per capita PFCE, while the values mirror aggregate numbers, there is one exception. Even as India closed the gap in aggregate terms, China widened the per capita PFCE marginally from -3.0 times of India in 2018 to -3.1 in 2022. This could be explained by China's negative population growth in 2022.

Comparing the nominal PFCE numbers alone could sometimes lead to a distortion. This is because the nominal figures do not take into account the discrepancies between the cost of living that might exist. Consumption is not just about consumed value but also consumed volume. And nominal figures only give an idea of total consumption value – might not give an idea of the volume of goods and services consumed. Thus, to account for consumption by value, a comparison of PPP figures becomes imperative.

On comparing the PPP numbers, the gap between the consumption expenditure further closes down. In PPP terms, China's PFCE is approximately 1.5 times that of India. To put this in context, China's GDP (PPP) is approximately 2.5 times of India's. The relative gap between China and India widened from -1.58 in 2018 to -1.66 in 2020 and 2021, but 2022 witnessed India closing the gap to -1.55.

However, in PPP terms, China witnessed a marginal increase of -$0.7 trillion owing to improved yuan-dollar PPP exchange rates. On the other hand, India added a trillion dollars to its consumption expenditure (PPP) in 2022 despite a worsening exchange rate.

Expenditure by categories

India's consumption expenditure is characterised by higher spending on food, clothing, footwear, and transport and low spending on education, culture, recreation, and healthcare – typical of an underdeveloped or developing market.

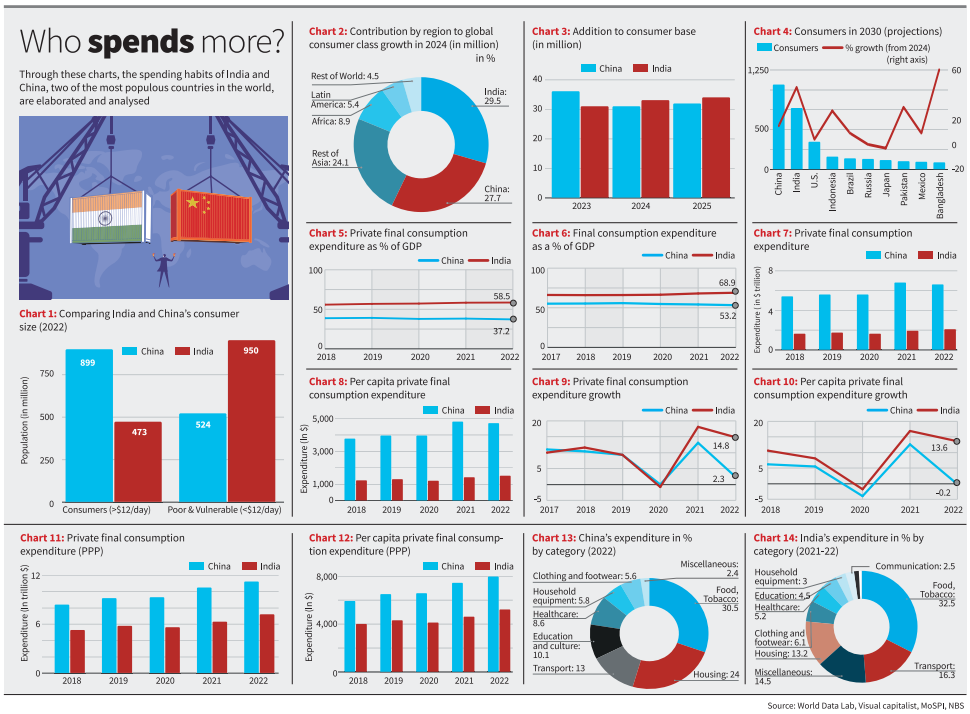
China's consumption basket, on the other hand, represents a relatively developed market. Even as food and beverages constitute the biggest chunk of China's consumption, it is declining as a percentage of its total consumption expenditure – a sign of a maturing market. Additionally, it spends a substantially higher percentage of its expenditure on housing, white goods, recreation, education, and healthcare than India. To put things in context, in advanced economies like the U.S., Japan, EU, Germany and the U.K., expenditure on food isn't the highest bracket.

In aggregate terms, India spends around half of what China spends on food, transport and communication, and clothing and footwear. For India, which is a fifth of the Chinese economy and spends almost the same percentage (of the total expenditure) as China on these three sectors, the fact that its total expenditure in the above three categories is around half of China is quite significant. In fact, India spends a little over 50% of what China spends on transport and communication. (Note: India's data for 2022 were not available.)

Adding to the optimism is the fact that the real growth rate registered by each of these individual categories in India often outperformed even the nominal growth rates observed in China.

Whether India's consumer class with increased spending enhances its appeal to foreign businesses as a preferred destination over its competitors amidst the China+1 narrative remains to be seen.

Amit Kumar is a Research Analyst at Takshashila Institution. He tweets at am_i_t_kumar.



Source: World Data Lab, Visual capitalist, MoSPI, NBS

THE GIST

- Both India and China have a large consumer base. A consumer is anyone who spends more than $12 a day, as per the Purchasing Power Parity [PPP], 2017.
- Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE), which measures total consumption expenditure by households and non-profit institutions serving households on goods and services, serves as a useful proxy for consumer spending especially as income and consumption are concentrated within the consumer classes.
- India's consumption expenditure is characterised by higher spending on food, clothing, footwear, and transport and low spending on education, culture, recreation, and healthcare — typical of an underdeveloped or developing market.

KEYWORD

Radical democracy: why is it still relevant today?

Scientific humanism and its political correlate offer a philosophical perspective of human freedom based on scientific knowledge in an age harangued by orthodoxy and regression

Prathmesh Kher

Periods of crisis call attention to the necessity for a radical reorganisation of society. This was the case with 19th century liberal democracy, which had degenerated into exploitation under capitalism, forcing revolutionaries to seek out a better alternative. In time, a large number of these radicals came under the influence of new collectivist doctrines, which offered a transitional dictatorship and centralised economic planning as a remedy to solve the defects of liberal democracy and capitalist exploitation.

The initial enthusiasm of that revolutionary age came to a close when the "spectre of communism" that had once threatened capitalist hegemony had itself degenerated into a dictatorship. The concurrent rise of 20th century fascism led to the development of a political situation where there were outright dictatorships on one end and what some called, the mere panacea of democratic formalities on the other. With the concluding period of the Second World War, millions were dead and the world was in a state of chaos. Many who had been champions of solving humanity's problems saw dictatorship as no solution at all. However, the question of reconciling the aspirations of freedom, and the desire for justice, continued to remain a quandary as before.

During this period of social crisis, the Indian freedom fighter and humanist philosopher Manabendra Nath Roy, and his Marxists colleagues, developed a theory which they felt offered a solution– they referred to it as radical democracy.

ISTOCKPHOTO

A new orientation

Before a contour of a radical democratic political economy can be laid out, a scientifically consistent philosophical outlook must be iterated. To this end, Roy and his colleagues developed the philosophy of new humanism. Humanism, the radicals argued, was as ancient as human beings, and could only be enriched by the new discoveries in scientific thought. A humanism enriched by these new developments in the understanding of the natural world would be best described as 'scientific' or 'new' Humanism.

Human behaviour includes the capacity for rational thought, the radicals argued. "Morality results from man's intelligent response to his surroundings. Therefore, it can be deduced from his innate rationality. Since rationality is inherent in human nature, it is only necessary to remind him of his biological heritage, and he will regain faith in himself and undo the harm done to him," Roy writes in his *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*. The realisation of the possibility of a secular rational morality opens up a new perspective before the modern world. The concepts of human dignity, sovereignty, and creativeness, have meaning only when they arise, not as a token to divine writ, but from the rational faculty of the individual.

To that end, Roy proposes in his *New Orientation*, "Revolution is not inevitable.... Fundamental changes in the structure of society take place only when there is a group of individuals who feel the necessity, who see the possibility of fulfilling it, and who can develop an adequate amount of will to bring about the changes which are both necessary and possible." That is, women and men, cognisant of their own capacity for reason, and driven to reshape the conditions around them, can do so by cooperating with each other to develop a just and free society.

A radical approach to elections

Democracy, if it is to mean a mere regularised counting of votes is not much more than deception, particularly if the voters have not had a chance to raise themselves up in dignity. In parliamentary democratic conventions, demagogues take power, by promising utopia to a hapless electorate; though once in power the demagogue is evidently unable to deliver, and must invariably resort to strongarm tactics to ensure retaining political power.

The decay of liberal democracies encouraged the rise of various collectivist doctrines which denied the possibility of individual freedom, ridiculing it as an empty abstraction. These doctrines, in turn, proclaimed that in order to be free the individual must merge himself in the mass. This also favoured political demagogues who preferred a mob that acts on appeals to passions. It was easier to sway voters by calls to their sentiments than to their reason. The more backward a populace is, the more easily they could be swayed by appeals to emotional prejudices. "The character of a party is to be judged not by its ability to catch votes, but by the merit of its proclaimed principles and published programme. The people should be asked to vote not for professions and promises, but by judging the record of a government... Under the formal parliamentary system, unscrupulous demagogues can always come to the top," he writes.

A conscious will to freedom, a sense of responsibility and the ability to critically examine the promises and programmes put before the people by parties and politicians are the preconditions for any successful democracy. One must become a judge as to whether such conditions exist in a given society. "To ensure that elections reflect an intelligent public opinion, there has to be an intelligent public opinion first," Roy writes.

The radical democratic approach to election begins with people in their localities meeting in local or regional conferences for discussions. Having come to understand political questions and economic problems for themselves, the people will see that they need not merely vote for this or that party to solve their problems. This would also cultivate the ability for independent judgement and as such the people could choose to elect candidates of their own choice, from amongst themselves.

These candidates would enjoy greater independence since they would not be dependent on any political outfit; they can rely on their own conscience and be directly responsible to the electorate. This would do away with the mechanical nature of party politics and the demagogy and corruption that comes in its wake. Such 'people's committees' would not only have the ability to pick independent candidates from amongst themselves but also eventually become the locus of a pyramidical democracy. Empowered with the right of recall and the ability to hold referendums, these organised local democracies would wield a direct and effective control of the mechanics of the State. A progressive democratic movement can occur only with the intelligent and conscious participation of the individuals who constitute a society. As such, the more individuals choose to think about and participate in the democratic process the more organically democratic it becomes.

A humanist economics

"It is indeed a stupendous task to plan the economic life of a fifth of the human race," Roy had written in his *People's Plan for Economic Development*. Centralisation of politics is concurrent with the centralisation of economics. Under the so-called 'free-market' economies this is done by capitalist concentration of wealth, and under nationalised economies it reverts to State capitalism.

Capitalism produces goods not with the primary consideration of supplying the needs of the people, but of selling them at a profit. When goods cannot be sold with sufficient profit, capitalists will curtail production. This is compounded in the case of countries like India where a large and continually expanding population is seen as detrimental to the economic development of the country. Rapid industrialisation is offered as a solution to many of these problems. However, industries can succeed only on the basis of a home market. A healthy export trade begins only when the home market is satisfied.

"Modernisation of agriculture is the greatest need of the economic life of our country if production of wealth is to be increased. But this is more a matter of organisation of rural economy than of mechanisation," Roy said in a 1949 lecture in Patna. Given the primacy for agriculture, the radical democrats cite three problems that need to be overcome in that regard. Firstly, a lack of irrigation which must be countered by the development of wells, reservoirs, canals, et al. Secondly, an improvement for the fertility of the land which could be incentivised by the State. Thirdly, the development of new roads, and the repair of old ones for the countryside. Finally, an organisation of rural consumers and local industries on a co-operative basis in order to provide employment and income for the rural populace.

A radical democratic programme includes provisos for unemployment insurance, old age pension, and other provisions for the upliftment of the citizens. But these must be made with the principle that economic produce is in line with use and with reference to human needs, with a specific focus on the development of health infrastructure, housing and education.

Why radical democracy?

The conditions of the contemporary world present a dismal picture for those who desire for freedom and do not see it as a contradiction to justice. Even as humanity is the most aware it has been about the cosmos and the laws that govern it, it is simultaneously the closest it has ever been to disintegration.

The way out must be one that harkens to the principles of scientific thought and humanist philosophy. Roy writes in *New Humanism*, "The brain is the means of production, and produces the most revolutionary commodity. Revolutions presuppose iconoclastic ideas. An increasingly large number of men and women, conscious of their creative power, motivated by an indomitable will to remake the world, moved by the adventure of ideas, and fired with the ideal of a free society, can create the conditions under which democracy will be possible"

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmaniam

"All in all (K. Sivakamasundari, Madurai)"

" 'All in all' is used in the sense of 'most important', 'very powerful' by most of us in India. It does not have this meaning in English. It means 'everything considered'.

All in all, it is a well-written book."

"Gibe, jibe"

'Gibe' means 'to taunt, heckle or mock'. It is usually followed by 'at'.

He gibed at his poor performance.

It is also used as a noun.

He couldn't stand her gibes.

'Jibe' also means 'gibe'. In American English 'jibe' is used as a verb to mean 'agree, be in accord'. It is a colloquial word and is followed by 'with'.

It jibes with what you said a few minutes ago.

The 'g' and 'j' are pronounced like the 'j' in 'judge' and 'i' is pronounced like the 'i' in 'mind'."

"Outside, outside of (K.L. Gowd)"

He was sitting outside of the room.

'Outside of' is common in American English. In British English 'outside' is used.

He was sitting outside the room.

In British English, 'outside of' is used in informal contexts to mean 'except for'.

Outside of Lakshman, *everyone behaved well.*"

"Famed (S.S. Ray, Calcutta)"

" 'Famed' is used in the sense of 'famous' and is acceptable. It was Time magazine which first used 'famed' in the sense of famous.

The city is famed for its gardens."

"Several readers have asked me to write a dialogue in typical Indian English. The following is written in 'very, very, very Indian English'.

"What's your good name?"

"Duryodhana".

"What are you?"

"I? I am doing nothing. I am keeping quiet only."

"Are you married?"

"Yes. Yes. I am having a Mrs. and two small, small kinds also."

"How old are the kids?"

"One, two aged, other four aged."

"Your parents are with you?"

"They lived but kicked the bucket."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"No sorry. All written on the forehead. It can't be wiped. What are you doing?"

"I am an engineer."

"What salary you get?"

"Not much."

"Tell no? How much? Three numbers, four numbers?"

"Four figures."

"Four figures? Not much? What you are saying?"

"You are wearing a nice shirt."

"Really? Stitched for Deepavali."

"I must be going now."

"Why? Any head-going business?"

"No. It is time for me to go home and have my bath."

"Head-bath or body-bath? I take head-bath daily only. I enjoy very much. What your address is?"

"I will write it for you. Do you have a piece of paper?"

"No. Paper, keeper. I don't carry. I walk freely. Nothing we brought. Nothing we take. Tell address. I have nice memory."

Published in The Hindu on December 31, 1991.

Word of the day

Haughty: having or showing arrogant superiority to and disdain of those one views as unworthy

Synonyms: imperious, swaggering, overbearing, disdainful, prideful

Usage: *He gave me a haughty look and turned away.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/haughtypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈhɔːti/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

The International Federation of Association Football, more commonly known as FIFA, was founded on this date in 1904. A quiz on the international regulatory body

Joan Sony Cherian

QUESTION 1
Apart from football, what are the other two sports the federation governs?

QUESTION 2
This journalist of the French paper *Le Matin* was instrumental in the founding of FIFA. Name him.

QUESTION 3
When and where was the first FIFA World Cup hosted? Why did England not participate in the game?

QUESTION 4
When and where was the first FIFA Women's World Cup held? Who won?

QUESTION 5
The bankruptcy of this company in 2001, which held media rights to the World Cup in Europe and the U.S., financially set back the federation. This event is seen as the beginning of a string of controversies and scandals in the federation regarding charges of fraud, bribery and corruption. Name the company.

QUESTION 6
In 1961, FIFA banned this country over its discriminatory sports rules. Name the country.

Visual question:
This incident is considered one of the most shameful events in the history of the FIFA World Cup. Name the incident and the player featured here. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This Slovenian pioneered modern beekeeping techniques. **Ans: Anton Janša**
2. The pairs of wings and eyes honey bees have. **Ans: Two and five respectively**
3. The name given to the dance that bees perform to communicate the location of food sources. **Ans: Waggle**
4. To an apiarist, this is what 'Propolis' means. **Ans: It is a substance used in construction of the bee hive and also for preserving honey and other perishables**
5. The function of invertase. **Ans: It change sucrose into equal parts glucose and fructose. It's the beginning of the production of honey**
6. The name given to the male bees which do not have a stringer. **Ans: Drone bees**
Visual: Name the part of a flower from which bees collect pollen. **Ans: Anther**
Early Birds: ViswanadhaRao Batchu| Vineet Giri| Jyot Prakash Gulati| Jagrati Shukla

From Page One

'Urban apathy' drives down polling to 60.4%

Alleging mismanagement by the EC, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said the poll body was attempting to sabotage the election and benefit the BJP by less voting.

Polling in West Bengal, which saw the highest turnout, was marred by scattered incidents of violence. Workers of the Trinamool Congress and the BJP clashed in various parts of Barrackpore, Bongaon, and Arambagh.

The EC said it had received 1,036 complaints from different political parties alleging malfunctioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and agents being stopped from entering booths.

Clashes broke out between supporters of the Trinamool and the BJP in the Khanakul area of the Arambagh constituency. In Hooghly, BJP MP and candidate Locket Chatterjee was allegedly heckled when she was on her way to a booth.

Violence was also reported from various parts of the Howrah constituency. In the Bongaon constituency, a local BJP leader was allegedly beaten up by Trinamool supporters outside a booth. EVM glitches were reported from some booths in Odisha and West Bengal.

Rae Bareli in Uttar Pradesh saw a turnout of 57.85%, while neighbouring Amethi, where Union Minister Smriti Irani is locked in a tight contest with the Congress's K.L. Sharma saw 54.15% turning out to vote.

The Congress claimed EVM malfunctioning and accused the BJP of not allowing people to cast votes in certain booths in Rae Bareli. "Booth number 5, Rasulpur in Sareni in Rae Bareli is closed since 8 a.m. (and) voters are going back. So this is how (the target of) 400 (seats) will be crossed!", the Uttar Pradesh Congress said on X.

It also alleged that Samajwadi Party candidate from Gonda, Shreya Verma, complained to the EC that fair polling was not taking place at two booths in the Mankapur area of the constituency. Voters of Hisampur Madho village in Kaushambi boycotted the polls.

Voting took place for five Lok Sabha seats and 35 Assembly seats in Odisha.

Some unidentified persons allegedly hacked an autorickshaw driver to death in Bargarh district of the State. The deceased was carrying some voters to a polling booth. While the family members claimed it was a political murder, police say personal enmity was the reason behind the crime.

Of the 49 Lok Sabha seats which went to the polls on Monday, the BJP had won 32 while the Congress won only Rae Bareli in 2019.

Helicopter crash kills Iran President

Iranian authorities first raised the alarm on Sunday afternoon when they lost contact with Raisi's helicopter as it flew through a fog-shrouded mountain area of the Jolfa region of East Azerbaijan province.

Raisi had earlier met Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on their common border to inaugurate a dam project.

On the return trip, only two of the three helicopters in his convoy landed in the city of Tabriz, setting off a massive search and rescue effort, with multiple foreign governments soon offering help.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi at first spoke of a "hard landing" and urged citizens to ignore hostile foreign media channels and get their information "only from state television".

As the sun rose on Monday, rescue crews said they had located the destroyed Bell 212 helicopter, with no survivors among the nine people on board.

State television channel IRIB reported that the helicopter had "hit a mountain and disintegrated" on impact.

Foreign countries had been closely following the search at a time of high regional tensions over the Gaza war raging since October 7.

Expressions of concern and offers of help had quickly come from countries including China, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey, which later offered their condolences.

Assange allowed to appeal extradition

Prior to this he had spent approximately seven years in the Ecuador Embassy in London after seeking asylum there in 2012, following charges of sexual offences in Sweden. The charges were dropped in 2017.

The U.S. Justice Department brought the case against Mr. Assange in 2019 – during the presidency of Donald Trump.

"The United States should never have brought this case," Mr. Assange's U.S. lawyer, Barry Pollack, told reporters at a briefing on Monday afternoon. "It is utterly inconsistent with First Amendment values," he said, adding that he hoped the U.S. would take a hard look at today's decision and decide whether it wanted to continue pursuing this case.

The Australian government has asked for the case to be dropped, a request U.S. President Joe Biden said his administration was "considering".

There was much more "enthusiasm" for prosecuting this case in the Trump administration, Ms. Assange told reporters on Monday afternoon, as she urged the Biden administration to reconsider pursuing it.

India condoles President Raisi's death; state mourning today

India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow, says Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Raisi's contribution to strengthening the India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered, he adds; Jaishankar also expresses his condolences

Kallol Bhattacherjee
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India will observe state mourning on Tuesday after the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash, which was confirmed by Tehran on Monday.

The helicopter carrying President Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian, and other senior officials went missing on Sunday when he was returning to Tehran after inaugurating a dam in the East Azerbaijan province.

The burnt remains of the helicopter were detected in the early hours of Monday, though the circumstances surrounding its last moments are yet to be clarified.

"Deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise of Dr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His contribution to strengthening the India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of Iran. India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his message which came soon after Iran officially announced the demise of Mr. Raisi and his colleagues.

Standing by: The Iranian Embassy in New Delhi lowered its flag to half-mast following the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. ANI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also expressed condolences to the Iranian people and said, "[I] recall my many meetings with them, most recently in January 2024."

As part of the state mourning for President Raisi, the National Flag will be flown half mast throughout India on all buildings where it is flown regularly and the Government of India will not hold any official entertainment on Tuesday, an official press release said.

Bilateral ties

Mr. Jaishankar had flown to Tehran in January when he held talks with Mr. Abdollahian and Mr. Raisi against the backdrop of the increasing number of attacks against ships by the Houthi rebels on the Red Sea. They also discussed India-Iran cooperation regarding the port of Chahbahar during that visit. India concluded a major agreement on May 13 with Iran for 10-year operation of the Chahbahar port.

The death of Mr. Raisi and Mr. Abdollahian has also cast a shadow over the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan on Tuesday. Other Foreign Ministers of SCO countries have already arrived in the Kazakh capital, and sources said a decision is still to be made about how to proceed.

As the election is under way, India sent Secretary (Economic Relations) Dammu Ravi, who was due to work with other delegations to prepare the final summit agenda for the SCO summit due to be held in early August. Earlier this year, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced that all SCO leaders planned to attend the summit in Astana.

With the sudden death of Mr. Raisi, Iran is preparing for fresh elections.

Earlier, in April, Eraj Elahi, the Iranian ambassador to India had told the media here that President Raisi was expected to visit later this year.

2 sentenced to death for rape, murder of minor girl

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

A special court for the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act in Rajasthan's Bhilwara on Monday sentenced two persons to death after their conviction for raping and burning alive a 14-year-old girl in a coal furnace last August.

The incident had triggered an outrage in the State, prompting the then Congress government to order an investigation under the case officer scheme.

The minor girl went missing on August 2, 2023 morning. Her family members reached a coal furnace area while looking for her. They informed the police after detecting the girl's charred bracelet and some bones in the furnace.

POCSO court judge Anil Kumar Gupta convicted, Kalu, 25, and Kanha, 21, and acquitted seven others.

ICMR distances itself from BHU's study on Covaxin

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has distanced itself from a Banaras Hindu University (BHU) study for "incorrectly" associating it with an observational study on the side-effects of COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin.

The ICMR said the recently published research paper titled "Long-term safety analysis of the BBV152 coronavirus vaccine in adolescents and adults: findings from a one-year prospective study in North India" was poorly designed with critical flaws, and asked why it should not take legal and administrative action for these lapses.

In its letter to the researchers, the ICMR said it had not provided any financial or technical support for the research. ICMR Director-General Rajiv Bahl called the paper "poorly designed", and said it "incorrectly and misleadingly" acknowledges financial or technical support from the ICMR. "ICMR cannot be associated with this poorly designed study," the letter says.

"We the authors would like to state that all communications received by us from ICMR are treated with utmost respect as confidential. We have already mailed the DG-ICMR with copy to the Director, IMS. We do not wish to make any other statements as we are scientists and do not like getting involved in unnecessary public controversies," the authors of the paper informed *The Hindu*.

The ICMR said it has not given any financial or technical support for the research.

In a press release on Monday, BHU noted that the "university has taken note of a study in connection with Covaxin after-effects and a series of reactions in that regard".

"We are aware of the communication made by the ICMR to the concerned individuals. The Institute of Medical Sciences is looking into the matter. It is also working on further strengthening and improving its research ecosystem," the BHU said.

The ICMR has directed BHU to immediately remove the "acknowledgement to ICMR" for the study and publish an *erratum*.

"We have also noticed that you have similarly acknowledged ICMR in similar previous papers without permission. Please explain why ICMR should not seek legal and administrative action against you," it noted.

In its letter, the ICMR listed out critical flaws with the study and said that it did not have a control group of unvaccinated individuals to prove that the side-effects were indeed associated with vaccination. Also it did not mention how frequently these adverse events were reported by the sample population to establish that they were associated with vaccination. It said the study tool was not consistent with the definition of "adverse events of special interest" that is globally accepted, and the responses of the participants were recorded one year after immunisation without verification of any clinical records or physician examination.

Delhi will get full Statehood after June 4, CM Kejriwal assures people at roadshow

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said law and order in the Capital is set to improve after June 4 as the INDIA bloc will come to power at the Centre and Delhi will get full Statehood, bringing the police under his government's control.

'Will work for people'

He also said the Centre-appointed Lieutenant-Governor will turn into a "Delhi man" after the victory of Opposition alliance and he will "work for the city people instead of acting against them".

Canvassing for AAP's East Delhi candidate Kuldeep Kumar, the Chief Minister at roadshows and meetings in Gandhi Nagar and Shahdara urged the people to vote for the Opposition alliance to ensure that he stays out of prison and continues his work for Delhiites.

Standing atop a black SUV along with his wife Sunita, Mr. Kejriwal said, "When you go to a police station, do the police listen to you. When you call on the PRC number, do they come to help you? This will change after June 4 if you vote for the INDIA bloc," he said.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and his wife Sunita campaigning for AAP's East Delhi candidate Kuldeep Kumar. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Pointing to his wife, the CM said she stood by him and visited him in Tihar Jail bringing news from people of Delhi.

Ms. Kejriwal said, "If you want my husband and your Chief Minister to remain outside prison, you all need to vote for AAP."

'Stipend for women'

The Chief Minister also assured the people that his government would fulfil its promise of giving ₹1,000 monthly stipend to all women aged 18 and above after the Lok Sabha polls.

He also slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said instead of fighting price rise, he is busy making plans to finish off the Opposition by putting their leaders behind bars in false cases.

"This is no way to run a country. This is hooliganism," Mr. Kejriwal said. "*Achhe din aanewale hai, Modiji jaane wale hai* (Good days are coming, Modi*ji* is going)," he said.

Questions arise over future of Parliament security unit

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

As the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) took over the security of most parts of the Parliament on Monday, questions swirl around the future of the unarmed Parliament Security Service (PSS) unit, the existence of which coincides with the adoption of the Constitution in 1950.

The unit, formerly known as the Watch and Ward staff, initially came into existence in 1929 after Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt dropped bombs on the Central Legislative Assembly, currently the old Parliament building or the Samvidhan Sadan. A new Parliament building facing the old structure was inaugurated last year.

Officials questioned the handing over of key functions to the CISF, one of the only paramilitary forces with limited experience in interacting with the public – at airports and Metro stations.

Apprehensions abound

While the orders for deploying the CISF in the lobby and the precincts of the new Parliament building are yet to be announced, officials said a PSS component will have to be retained as the CISF officials may not be adept in recognising the MPs or former members or preventing the entry of an "imposter".

"PSS is well-trained to interact with MPs, former MPs, etc. It is their House. There is a difference between handling airport security and Parliament, an autonomous body. I have not seen any such order till now about CISF induction taking place on the orders of the Speaker, the ultimate authority. The orders are being issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which sets a wrong precedent," said P.D.T. Achary, constitutional expert and former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha.

The orders for deploying CISF in the precincts of the new Parliament building are yet to be announced. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

It was under Mr. Achary's tenure that the Watch and Ward staff was renamed the PSS in 2008. He added that replacing the PSS would pose a risk and that even every State Assembly had their own Watch and Ward staff to facilitate the elected representatives.

Tiruchi Siva, Rajya Sabha MP from Tamil Nadu, told *The Hindu* that he was stopped thrice by the CISF personnel on Monday. "I was in Parliament to attend a programme, the CISF personnel stopped me thrice and checked my identity card. This was not the case earlier as PSS staff recognised us and facilitated the entry," Mr. Siva said, adding that the PSS was an integral part of Parliament security.

Last week, the Parliament Duty Group of the Central Reserve Police Force (CPRF) deployed for peripheral security was withdrawn. Earlier, the Delhi Police deployed for frisking and scanning of bags were also removed from Parliament security responsibilities. The last time such large-scale changes were made was after the December 13, 2001, terror attack when terrorists stormed the building. Two PSS officials, Matbar Singh Negi and Jagdish Prasad Yadav, were killed while performing their duty.

A week after a security breach was reported in the new building on December 13, 2023, the MHA accorded in-principle approval to the CISF to survey the Parliament premises and its buildings for regular deployment of personnel on a comprehensive pattern under the Government Building Security.

The overall security is administered by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

An uncertain future

This development has several PSS officials worried about their future. "We were hired by the Parliament Secretariat. Since morning, our attendance application has replaced the subject Parliament of India with Government of India. We are hearing that they will force us to retire at 55. No fresh hirings have been done in the past 10 years," said a PSS official.

There are around 600 PSS officials deployed in Parliament at various ranks.

ELECTIONS 2024

ODISHA

Vital voices: Women voting at a special polling booth in Kandhamal district of south Odisha. BISWARANJAN ROUT

KASHMIR

Queuing up: Voters waiting in line to cast their ballots at a polling station in Bandipora district of north Kashmir. NISSAR AHMAD

WEST BENGAL

In order: People getting their names checked on the voters' list inside a polling station in Howrah district of West Bengal. REUTERS

UTTAR PRADESH

In the frontline: Women waiting in queue to vote at a polling booth in Lucknow on Monday. SANDEEP SAXENA

A first-time voter outside a unique polling station in the remote Warshi village near the Siachen Glacier base camp in Ladakh after voting on Monday. REUTERS

In first election since U.T. status, Ladakh records 69.62% turnout

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency recorded 69.62% voting, till 11.50 p.m. on Monday, in its first-ever election since the region was converted into a Union Territory in 2019.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer of the Union Territory, Leh district, where Buddhists are in majority, recorded 64.9% polling, and Kargil, Ladakh's Muslim-majority district, recorded 74% voting.

There has been a downward trend in Ladakh's voting. From 73.52% polling in 2004, it touched 71.05% in 2019 and dropped further this year. Ladakh has witnessed a growing trend of migration of local students and businessmen outside the Union Territory.

That said, many see this election as crucial for pushing the demands of Statehood and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule.

'Crucial election'

"Today, we have the opportunity to participate in the festival of democracy. This might be our last chance to choose the right government, so it's crucial to use our precious vote wisely," Syed Kazim Hussaini, a voter from Kargil, said.

Sajjad Kargili, who withdrew his nomination to support Independent candidate Haji Hanifa Jan, said he voted "to strengthen and support the development and democracy in India, particularly in Ladakh".

The Lok Sabha election in Ladakh is being held against the backdrop of Leh and Kargil residents demanding Statehood and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule. While the BJP and the INDIA bloc have fielded two Buddhist candidates, Mr. Kargili has backed an Independent Muslim candidate.

"I cast my valuable vote for a better future for Ladakh and India," Konchok Stanzin, a councillor from Chushul, said.

There are 1,84,804 voters spread over a vast region. An official said it had taken days to ensure staff and machines reached the polling booths in high-altitude areas. He said a polling booth was set up for five voters at Warshi village near the Siachen Glacier base camp and Anley Phu near the India-China Border. These areas are at an altitude of 15,520 ft.

With 58.17% vote, ice melts in Baramulla

Women take the lead in voting in many areas; relatives of active militants and even the cadre of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami came out to exercise their franchise; the previous best turnout in the constituency was 46.65% in 1996; Omar Abdullah, Sajad Lone and Engineer Rashid are in the fray

Peerzada Ashiq
BARAMULLA

A shift in the voting pattern in the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency in the Kashmir Valley pushed the polling percentage to 58.17% by 11.50 p.m. on Monday, breaking the previous record of 46.65% in 1996.

An unprecedented number of women, relatives of active militants and even cadres of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) turned up to cast their votes.

"Zero violence was reported during voting in Baramulla. Poll percentage increased from 4% in 2019 to 44% in Sopore," said P.K Pole, Chief Electoral Officer, J&K.

The scene in Sopore in Baramulla district was in contrast to the past when a trickle of voters would walk gingerly towards deserted polling booths. Sopore registered the highest turnout in three decades. It is a bastion of the JeI and the home town of senior separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Mohammad Ashraf Ganie, president of the Sopore Market, was among the senior citizens who cast their votes for the first time in their lives. "Turnout in Sopore would be 1% or 2% in the past. Because of the situation, I never voted all these years. People voted this time to see development and prosperity in Sopore, which is facing both an acute water and power crisis. Youth also came forward," Mr. Ganie said.

Several voters in the town talked about their concerns, including the harsh process of police verification for jobs, sealing of houses and denial of passports for being relatives of militants and separatists. "We hope the elected representatives will put an end to this harsh process," a voter said, on the condition of anonymity.

D-day duty: Voters queue up to cast their ballots at a polling station in Pattan in Baramulla district on Monday. NISSAR AHMAD

Dawood Mir, brother of active militant Bilal Mir, said he had come to vote for "Sopore's development". Two other brothers of his are in jail because of the sibling who is a militant, he said. "One brother is in the Kupwara jail and another in a Jammu jail. We will try our best to bring our militant brother home. But I request the government to release my brothers," he said. Family members of other active militants such as Omar, Abid Qayoom and Umar Lone from Baramulla district also came to exercise their franchise.

Scores of banned JeI members were seen voting in the Baramulla-Handwara-Sopore belt. "I have been voting since 1969. It was because of rigging in 1987 that our faith in the electoral process got eroded. If rigging is not allowed and the ban on the JeI is lifted, we will contest. Even otherwise we will come out and vote. I made the decision (to vote) after gauging the situation," Ghulam Qadir Lone, a JeI member, said.

Large numbers of women queued up outside polling booths, often outnumbering men. In the first six hours (till 1 p.m.), Sopore recorded 55,959 votes by women and 55,385 by men; Baramulla town recorded 63,375 votes from women and 63,303 votes from men; Pattan registered 51,525 votes from women and 50,730 votes from men; and Trehgam had 39,547 votes from women and 38,802 votes from men.

"We are voting to end helplessness. We are voting to secure the future of our youth. We yearn for a lasting peace," said a woman voter in Trehgam.

As many as 22 candidates are contesting the Baramulla seat, which has a total of 17.47 lakh voters. The fight is mainly between Omar Abdullah (National Conference), Sajad Lone (J&K People's Conference) and Engineer Rashid (Awami Ittehad Party). Mr. Rashid, who was jailed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, has been in the Tihar prison since August 2019.

Violence and altercation between candidates mark West Bengal Phase 5 polling

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Amid incidents of violence and a charged political atmosphere, West Bengal registered a 76.05% turnout in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election.

Among the seven Lok Sabha constituencies that went to the polls on Monday, Arambag registered the highest polling at 79.5%.

Isolated incidents of violence were reported from Barrackpore, Bongaon, and Arambagh, and passions ran high when candidates contesting for Opposition parties were confronted by supporters of the Trinamool Congress.

At Dhanekhali in Hooghly district, BJP candidate Locket Chatterjee came face to face with Trinamool Congress MLA Asima Patra, and slogans were raised by both sides.

While Trinamool supporters led by Ms. Patra raised slogans of *Joy Bangla*, the BJP's supporters responded with "Jai Shri Ram".

A voter shows her ink-marked finger after casting her vote in West Bengal on Monday. ANI

"You are a thief," Ms. Chatterjee shouted at Ms. Patra, who responded, "You are a dacoit." At Chandannagar in the Hooghly Lok Sabha Constituency, women with slippers in hand tried to accost Ms. Chatterjee.

Tension in Barrackpore

Tension prevailed in Barrackpore, where BJP candidate Arjun Singh faced protests by Trinamool supporters and was seen using unparliamentary language in public. At Manirampur in Barrackpore, the police and Central forces had to use force to disperse a mob that was targeting Mr. Singh.

In the Uluberia Lok Sabha constituency, Left-supported Congress candidate Ajhar Mullick was seen chasing Trinamool supporters from a polling booth.

Clashes broke out between supporters of the Trinamool and the BJP in the Khanakul area of the Arambagh constituency as both parties clashed over stopping polling agents from entering the booths. In the Gayeshpur area of the Bongaon constituency, local BJP leader Subir Biswas was allegedly beaten by Trinamool goons outside a booth. He was later shifted to hospital.

There were reports of violence from the Liluah area of Howrah, where the BJP accused Trinamool workers of booth jamming, leading to clashes between both groups.

Mumbai turnout low after voting slows to a crawl; many leave without casting vote

Abhinay Deshpande
MUMBAI

Despite an energetic campaign for 13 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region saw a low voter turnout, plagued by complaints of missing names, inadequate facilities, and a slow voting process.

Voters in several parts of Mumbai reported waiting in long lines for over an hour because of the slow voting pace. Many left without casting their vote owing to the lengthy wait, compounded by the humidity and scorching temperatures. Maharashtra recorded an average polling of 54.33% on Monday, lower than the 55.38% turnout in 2019.

Of the 13 constituencies spread across the Mumbai region and north Maharashtra, the highest turnout was at Dindori in Nashik district at 62.66%, while the lowest was in Kalyan in Thane district at 47.08% according to provisional data from the Election Commission (EC).

Wait on: Long queue outside a polling station at Bandra East in Mumbai on Monday. EMMANUAL YOGINI

"We came to the booth at 12.30 p.m., and now it is already 1.30 p.m. I don't understand how long we need to wait. There is no proper seating arrangement, only three booths and so many people waiting," said Sneha Kumar, a first-time voter waiting to cast her vote in Dharavi.

Congress leader Muzaffar Hussain alleged that names of several voters from Mira Road-Bhayandar and Thane were missing from the electoral rolls. "Without verifying and checking, the EC has deliberately deleted the names of many voters from the list," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and his son Aaditya criticised the poll body for the slow pace of voting in Mumbai, alleging that EC officials were delaying voting in areas where his party traditionally received more votes.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis quickly responded to the complaints, and urged the EC to address the complaints of the slow voting process in the city.

SC refuses woman's plea for postal ballot

Justice Bela M. Trivedi, heading a Supreme Court Vacation Bench, orally remarked "everybody would like to sit at home and cast their votes" while dismissing a 78-year-old woman's plea to exercise her constitutional right by postal ballot.

The Bench on Monday dismissed the plea by Sarla Srivastav who said she was suffering from severe osteoarthritis in both knees and had been bedridden for the past three months. She had wanted to vote by postal ballot for elections in Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh which went to the polls on May 7.

Her petition was an appeal against the Chhattisgarh High Court's refusal to give her permission to vote through postal ballot in an order on May 6. The court had said it was too late to do anything.

Justice Bela M. Trivedi says 'everybody would like to sit at home and cast their votes'.

Calcutta HC pulls up BJP for its advertisements

The Calcutta High Court on Monday issued an injunction restraining the BJP from publishing advertisements that violate the election code until June 4, the day the Lok Sabha election process ends.

The court, in the injunction order, also restrained the BJP from publishing advertisements mentioned by the Trinamool Congress in its petition claiming unverified allegations against it and its workers. It also criticised the Election Commission (EC) for not addressing the complaints promptly.

Counsel appearing for the Trinamool contended before the court that it is being prejudiced by some newspaper advertisements by the BJP, claiming violation of the poll code and media compendium issued by the commission. PTI

The soul of Duryodhan has entered the Congress... That is why they say that Muslims have the first right over the country's resources

YOGI ADITYANATH
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Election official dies on duty at polling station

A 56-year-old election officer died of a heart attack at a polling booth in the Mumbai South Lok Sabha constituency where polling was under way on Monday, the police said. After Sunil Laxman collapsed, he was taken to a nearby hospital, where he died during treatment, an official said. PTI

When you think he [Modi] cannot lie anymore, he speaks another lie... Modi himself speaks of 'shamshan, kabristan', Yogi speaks of 80/20

SAGARIKA GHOSE
Trinamool leader

INBRIEF

18 killed, 4 injured as goods vehicle plunges into valley

Seventeen women and a man were killed and four others injured when a mini goods vehicle plunged into a valley in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district on Monday, the police said. The victims, after plucking *tendu* leaves from a forest, were returning in the vehicle meant for transporting goods, he said. The vehicle skidded off the road, tumbled down considerably and crashed onto the road below the valley, the official said. After being alerted, a police team rushed to the spot and launched the rescue exercise, he added. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai condoled the deaths and instructed to provide the best medical assistance to the injured. PTI

SC dismisses plea challenging three new criminal laws

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a petition challenging the three new criminal laws – the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill. A Vacation Bench of Justices Bela M. Trivedi and Justice Pankaj Mithal allowed petitioner-advocate Vishal Tiwari to withdraw, saying he narrowly escaped imposition of costs for filing the petition. Justice Trivedi noted the new Acts have not come into force so far. The petition claimed the new laws, meant to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Evidence Act, suffered from 'discrepancies'.

Mamata's offensive against monks stirs the poll plot

The remarks by Bengal Chief Minister have drawn a sharp response from Prime Minister Modi, who has accused her of trying to appease her vote bank under pressure from fundamentalists

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Halfway through the Lok Sabha election in West Bengal, Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee has opened a new front, against Hindu monks, stirring the poll plot in the State.

For the second time in three days, the Chief Minister targeted a prominent monk of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha and blamed him for the riots at Beldanga in Murshidabad during Ram Navami processions last month.

"If he wants to do BJP, he can, but he should do it wearing its badge," Ms. Banerjee said at a rally in Bankura district, referring to Kartick Maharaj of the BSS, The Chief Minister said the monk was earlier associated with Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and now was with the BJP.

While singling out Kartick Maharaj, the Trinamool leader tried to do a course correction and said she was not against any organisation. "I am not against Ramakrishna Mission (RKM). Why should I be against an institution and show disrespect? Even I paid a visit to *maharaj* (former head of the mission) when he was ill. I have only talked about one or two people," she said. She praised the BSS, and said it did philanthropic work.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee waves to the supporters during an election rally in Bankura on Sunday. ANI

On Saturday, the Chief Minister had said that she "does not consider *sadhus* (monks) who indulge in politics as *sadhus*". Her remarks were directed at certain monks of the BSS, the RKM and ISKCON.

A day later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Chief Minister was trying to "appease her vote bank under pressure from Muslim fundamentalists". On Monday, he said Ms. Banerjee was threatening Hindu monks from an open platform.

Mr. Modi said that after Ms. Banerjee's remarks, an ashram of the RKM was attacked in Jalpaiguri district. Describing the RKM, the BSS and ISKCON as part of West Bengal's spiritual heritage, the Prime Minister said, "Bengal will not accept the insult on Ramakarishna Mission" and other Hindu organisations.

Kartick Maharaj, who is also known as Swami Pradiptananda Maharaj, has sent a legal notice to Ms. Banerjee, demanding an apology for her alleged defamatory remarks about the organisation.

The development comes at a time when there have been attempts to polarise the election campaign. The BJP leadership has accused the Trinamool of trying to make Hindus second grade citizens in the State, whereas leaders of the Trinamool have made communally charged statements for which the Election Commission had to take note and issue notice. Also, a section of imams in West Bengal has issued a press statement asking people to vote for the Trinamool to defeat the BJP.

Political analyst and psephologist Biswanath Chakraborty said Ms. Banerjee's remarks will lead to polarisation of Hindu votes.

"Elections in semi-urban and urban areas are yet to be held and these organisations have a large following among the Hindu population. The remarks by the Chief Minister are ill-timed. Moreover, it also exposes the double standards because she is silent on the letter of imams and is targeting monks who are associated with political activities," he said.

Naveen's office and home taken over by miscreants, says PM

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that the Odisha Chief Minister's Office and residence had been taken over by miscreants, and this set-up would be taken apart when the saffron party came to power.

In what is being viewed as the shrillest of attacks Mr. Modi has mounted on Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his close aide V.K. Pandian, a Tamil Naduborn former IAS official, during his whirlwind tours to Odisha this election, the Prime Minister said the mafia was controlling everything and not allowing anyone to compete.

Mr. Modi said there were discussions about how the keys of Ratna Bhandar, the inner chamber of Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri, had gone to Tamil Nadu. "Even Jagannath Mandir is not safe under Biju Janata Dal rule. For the past six years, the keys of Shri Jagannatha's 'Ratna Bhandar' have been missing. Leaders of the BJD are involved in this conspiracy. Once the BJP forms the government in Odisha, we will make the report of the Commission of Inquiry public," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets supporters at Puri.

Mr. Modi reiterated that Odisha continued to lag in its development path despite the State possessing huge natural resources. Thousands of youth and farmers were leaving the State in search of work. "I am deeply hurt," he said.

More promises

The Prime Minister urged voters to give the BJP an opportunity for five years as they had given 25 years to the BJD. "Give BJP a chance and I assure you, a person belonging to Odisha who knows the tradition and culture of the State will become the Chief Minister," he said.

He also promised to increase the minimum support price of paddy to ₹3,100 a quintal and said that farmers would get the money directly in the bank accounts within 48 hours.

Odisha records nearly 70% turnout amid stray incidents of violence

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The second phase of simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha ended with stray incidents of violence being reported on Monday.

The provisional voter turnout in the polling for five Lok Sabha constituencies and 35 Assembly segments stood at 69.34% at 11.50 p.m.

The Bargarh Lok Sabha constituency polled 76.2% votes followed by Bolangir with 71.46%, Kandhamal 70.37%, Sundargarh 67.74%, and Aska 60.78%.

Chief Electoral Officer Nikunja Behari Dhal said, "We came to know from our webcasting camera, that there were long queues at different polling booths. Voting was affected in Bhanjanagar and Daringbadi areas due to heavy rains and hailstorms."

Citizen voice: Voters queue up to cast their votes in the Lok Sabha election in Odisha on Monday. ANI

The first phase of elections in the State had seen over 75% of voters exercising their rights in four Lok Sabha and 28 Assembly seats on May 13.

This phase sealed the fate of heavyweight leaders, including Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, former Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram, former Indian hockey captain and former Union Minister Dilip Tirkey, and State Forest and Environment Minister Pradip Amat.

This time, Mr. Patnaik is contesting two Assembly seats – his traditional Hinjili seat in his home district of Ganjam and Kantabanji in Balangir district.

While polling was going on in the Bargarh Lok Sabha constituency, an autorickshaw driver was stabbed to death. The murder took place near Sarsara village, barely 300 metres away from the polling booth.

Though family members claimed this was an outcome of political rivalry, the police said the real intent of the murder would be ascertained only after investigation.

Congress seeks report from West Bengal in-charge over defacing of Kharge's posters

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Terming the defacing of posters of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in front of the party's State headquarters in Kolkata an act of "gross indiscipline", the Congress on Monday asked its West Bengal in-charge to submit a report.

Mr. Kharge, in an interview to the news agency PTI on Monday, described West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury as a "fighter" of his party, and asserted that the Congress was in an alliance with the Left in Bengal.

On Sunday, several posters and hoardings of Mr. Kharge were defaced with ink and "agent of Trinamool Congress" written over them after Mr. Chowdhury was snubbed by Mr. Kharge for questioning Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee's loyalty to the INDIA bloc.

Mallikarjun Kharge

Sources said Mr. Chowdhury had asked party workers to lodge a formal police complaint and remove the defaced posters.

Issuing a stern warning, party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said it had been brought to the notice of the party high command that a few office-bearers and workers of the party had made certain uncharitable remarks against Mr. Kharge.

".. The Indian National Congress shall not tolerate such public display of defiance and indiscipline," he said.

Political tussle

On May 18, Mr. Kharge said, "She [Ms. Banerjee] recently said that she will join the government. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will not take the decision. The decision will be taken by me and the high command, and those who do not agree will go out."

Reacting to this, Mr. Chowdhury had said, "I cannot speak in favour of someone who wants to finish me and our party in Bengal politically. I do not want the State Congress to be used for her [Ms. Banerjee's] personal agenda."

(With PTI inputs)

Was once a member of RSS: Calcutta HC judge

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

Justice Chitta Ranjan Dash, who retired as a judge of the Calcutta High Court on Monday, said he was a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS).

Speaking at his farewell at the High Court in the presence of the judges and members of the bar, Justice Dash said he was "ready to go back to the organisation" if it called him for any assistance or for any work that he was capable of doing.

Justice Dash said he had distanced himself from the organisation for about 37 years because of his work.

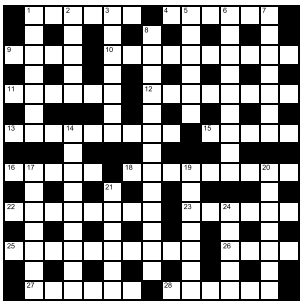
Demitting office after over 14 years as a judge, Justice Dash came to the Calcutta High Court from the Orissa High Court on transfer.

THE CROSSWORD + 14180

(set by Afterdark)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Part-time auditor at Southern University submits a bill ultimately... (6)
4 ...working as stopgap (6)
9 Weight of the wrapper starts with ten and reduces exponentially (4)
10 Device used in the past vehicle with misgiving and hesitation (4,6)
11 Basically third son has material (6)
12 Abstain from tea as per advice? Perfect (8)
13 Hungry lady, out of work after constant stalking by people, church officials (9)
15 Discreet company in California at county border (5)
16 Warns Cristiano and Ronaldo diving slyly in the front (5)
18 These are used to log-in and take drastic measures to suppress news upfront (9)
22 These days, getting order one becomes blue (8)
23 Infosys temporarily prevented usage (6)
25 English dramatist takes chicken on Christmas (4,6)
26 Ball gets bat's edge and drops basically (4)
27 An alternative to her? Primarily it's terribly exciting in a bad way (6)
28 Withdraw or lead, but not quietly (6)

Down

1 Type of cable, cord that is cut in half having 1111 etched on left (7)
2 Descriptions on glasses (5)
3 Pseudoscience my chapel disseminates without pressure (7)
5 My optician finally provides a drug in counter for part of the eye (6)
6 Lover's in a marriage basically, or one troubled initially, acting (9)
7 Explosive is unsophisticated, missing the core, made without cap (7)
8 Relatives get rest in brawl; Oh, they are relaxed (8-2-3)
14 Fish and wine, think about poetry essentially (3,6)
17 Marine polyps, one born around first working day of the week (7)
19 Rest in lodge across university (7)
20 European general holding a container in lift (7)
21 Sit behind editor, facing the other side and dismiss (6)
24 Fighter bashed grabbing from the back with a weapon (5)

SUDOKU

						1		5
				3	5			9
9		5			2		3	
	6		5		9	3		
1								7
		8	2		3		6	
	1		4			6		8
7			8	5				
8		4						

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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Solution to previous puzzle

C	O	L	O	U	R		E	A
P		V		B		E		I
I	I	D	E	S	M	A	N	R
	J		R		O		S	
A	M	A	T	E	U	R	I	S
				R		I		O
D	I	S	T	A	S	T	E	
	M		H					T
U	P	K	E	E	P		A	C
	S	R		O		T		M
M	E	T	A		S	T	R	E
	C		F		T		E	
R	A	D	I	U	M		E	L
	T		S	A		S		S
M	E	E	T	I	N	G	S	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	6	1	3	4	2	5	9	8
3	9	5	6	1	8	4	7	2
2	8	4	5	9	7	1	6	3
5	4	3	1	8	9	6	2	7
8	1	7	2	3	6	9	5	4
6	2	9	4	7	5	8	3	1
1	7	2	9	6	4	3	8	5
4	5	6	8	2	3	7	1	9
9	3	8	7	5	1	2	4	6

FAITH

Greatness of Nammazhwar

In Vaishnavism, when one says Koil it is understood to refer to Srirangam, and Tiumalai would refer to Tiruvengadam, Similarly, the word Azhwar by itself is held to refer to Nammazhwar, who is celebrated as the chief among the Vaishnavite saints, said Tirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh in a discourse. His contribution to bringing the scriptures home to the layman is unparalleled, which is why he towers over the others. Saints and seers have celebrated Nammazhwar as the embodiment of the Vaishnavite preceptors. While Nammazhwar himself is equated as the atma, all the other Azhwars constitute different parts of the body. Nammazhwar is known as *Vedam Tamil seidha maran*, since he brought the four vedas, originally in Sanskrit, to the Tamils as Prabhandams. The essence of the Rig Veda is Tiru Viruttam, Yajur Veda is Tiru Asiriyam, Sama Veda is rendered as Tiruvaimozhi and Atharvana Veda is presented as Periya Tiruvandathi. Born in the Tamil month of Vaikasi under the Visakam star, he churned his tongue in order to distil the vedas and present them to bhaktas, just as how Perumal churned the milky ocean to bring up the nectar of immortality to devas.

Like the four-faced Brahma, who gave Sanskrit Vedas to the world, Nammazhwar too is hailed as four-faced since he rendered Vedas in 4 attributes.

INBRIEF

Hero MotoCorp to expand EV range to cater to more clients

Hero MotoCorp is looking to expand its presence in the electric two-wheeler segment as it aims to introduce new models below its current range to cater to a broader set of customers, a senior company official said. "We are expanding our portfolio in the first half of this year (current fiscal).. into the mid and the mass segment as well," Hero MotoCorp Chief Business Officer – Emerging Mobility B.U. Swadesh Srivastava said during an analysts' call. PTI

India Cements Q4 net loss narrows to ₹50.06 cr. on sales

India Cements Ltd. on Monday reported narrowing of consolidated net loss to ₹50.06 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024, on improved sales volume. The company had posted a net loss of ₹243.77 crore in the same quarter a year earlier, India Cements Ltd. said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the quarter under review was at ₹1,266.65 crore as against ₹1,485.73 crore in the corresponding period a year earlier. PTI

Wheels India Q4 PAT surges 64%, to pay ₹7.39 dividend

Wheels India Ltd. reported fourth-quarter net profit grew 64.3% to ₹36.8 crore compared with ₹22.4 crore in the year-earlier period. Revenue for the quarter ended March 31, 2024 was lower at ₹1,167 crore compared with ₹1,172 crore in the same period last year. For FY24, the company's net profit increased 8.6% to ₹67.9 crore compared with ₹62.5 crore in the previous year. The company's board has recommended a dividend of ₹7.39 per share.

SC agrees to waive telcos' interest on I-T dues on licence fee

The Court observed 'the peculiar facts of the case and lapse of time in litigation with regard to the Telecom Policy', passing its May 17 order

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has given a major relief for telecom service providers, including Bharti Airtel, Reliance and Vodafone Idea, by waiving off interest due on income tax arising from an October 16, 2023 judgment, which held that telecom licence fee should be treated as entirely "capital in nature".

A Bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyyan agreed to a waiver of the interest levy after the assessees (telcos) said payment of the tax demand from the year 2000-2001 was itself a "heavy burden". The telcos had urged the court to at least waive the interest payable on the tax for the period.

Burden lifted: The telcos urged the court to waive the interest payable on the tax for the period beginning 2000-2001 KAMAL NARANG

Centre objects

Additional Solicitor General N. Venkataraman, appearing for the income tax department, had objected to the request. He had contended that it was only logical for the assessees to pay the interest if they were meeting the tax demand.

After giving thoughtful consideration to the submissions, the Bench, in a four-page order dated May 17, published on Monday, directed that "since the judgment of this court is dated October 16, 2023, and having regard to the Telecom Policy, which commenced from the year 1999, the payment of interest for the period for which the tax demand is now to be met in respect of these cases stands waived".

'Not a precedent'

However, the court made it clear that the order would not act as a precedent.

"The order shall not be a precedent in any other case as we have passed this order bearing in mind the peculiar facts of this case and having regard to the lapse of time in litigation," the Bench underscored.

The National Telecom Policy of 1994 was substituted by the new Telecom Policy in July 1999.

Telecom Policy 1999

The 1999 policy had stipulated that a licencee (telco) would be required to pay a one-time entry fee, and additionally, a licence fee on a percentage share of gross revenue.

The October 2023 judgment had concluded that the payment of the licence fee was "intrinsic to the existence of the licence as well as trade itself. Such a payment has to be treated or characterised as capital only". "Consequence of non-payment would result in ouster of the licensee from the trade," the Supreme Court had observed in its October judgment.

The apex court judgment was based on appeals against a Delhi High Court judgment of December 2013. The High Court had confirmed an Income Tax Appellate Tribunal finding that the variable licence fee paid by telcos under the 1999 policy was revenue expenditure and not capital.

CCI's Kaur bats for new analytical tools for digital market

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

To deal with competition challenges posed by digital markets, CCI Chairperson Ravneet Kaur pitched for regulatory agility, new analytical tools and possibly, novel regulatory frameworks, specifically tailored to the digital context.

While stressing on the need for a nuanced approach blending traditional competition analysis with a deep understanding of digital-market dynamics, she said issues such as "algorithmic collusion" pose novel challenges for regulators. The CCI has been taking steps to address anti-competitive concerns in digital markets.

The CCI will be conducting a market study on Artificial Intelligence (AI) that will be aimed at developing an in-depth understanding of the emerging competition dynamics in the development ecosystems of AI.

She said the transformative capabilities of AI have significant pro-competition potential. At the same time, there may be competition concerns emanating from the use of AI, she said, adding there is a growing emphasis on consumer welfare in the formulation and enforcement of competition law.

"Authorities are increasingly considering the broader impact of new age business practices on consumer choice, innovation, and overall market health beyond just price effects."

'Much ado about nothing', says govt., on spice export worries

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Downplaying concerns about the safety of India's spices and food exports, stemming from recent recalls of a few batches of spices by countries like Hong Kong and Singapore, the government is working with industry players to help ensure compliance with varying pesticide residue standards in different countries.

Last Friday, neighbouring Nepal banned four spice-mix products from Indian firms citing 'suspected ethylene oxide (EtO) contamination, an issue that was first flagged by Hong Kong after testing a few batches of products from Indian firms Everest and MDH. Senior government officials said the Hong Kong episode was likely caused because of laxity from distributors who might have shipped a few consignments there, that were originally meant for some other markets.

"The maximum residue limit for EtO, which is used as a fumigant for food crops, is different across countries, and the impact of this chemical's residue in food is not a settled issue. Moreover, if not aerated properly, it effectively converts into a metabolite 2 C-E (Chloroethanol)," an official said, requesting anonymity.

While Hong Kong prohibits the use of EtO in food products, Singapore allows EtO residue of 50 milligrams (mg) per kilogram, and the European Union pegs it at 0.02 mg to 0.1 mg per kilo for different food products. The U.S. and Canada permit EtO residue of up to 7 mg and 2 C-E residue of 940 mg, per kilo.

'Maximum residue limit for EtO, used as a fumigant for food crops, is different across countries'

"India's spices exports had grown 13.5% in 2023-24 to hit $4.2 billion and 99.8% of the 1.4 million tonnes shipped out last year had met the quality requirements of different countries. Even in marine products, 99.88% of the 1.76 million tonnes exported last year met importing nations' quality norms," stressed another official.

Over the past month, the government has held three consultations with spices exporters and shared comprehensive guidelines to avoid possible contamination of EtO at all stages of the supply chain, from sourcing the product to packaging, transportation, and testing.

For Singapore- and Hong Kong-bound shipments, sampling and testing for EtO have been made mandatory. Separately, efforts are underway to put in place a traceability mechanism for spices, from farm to the export market, as done in the case of peanuts and grapes and products with Geographical Indicator status such as Darjeeling Tea.

Airbus Helicopters, SIDBI sign MoU for helicopter financing

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Airbus Helicopters and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for financing purchase of Airbus' helicopters in India.

Under the MoU, Airbus Helicopters and SIDBI would identify potential civil helicopter operators in India interested in financing solutions for purchasing the helicopters.

While Airbus would provide technical and helicopter-industry knowledge, SIDBI would be responsible for evaluating the prospects and financing them exclusively for Airbus.

"This is expected to open new avenues for financing MSMEs related to this segment," said Rahul Priyadarshi, Chief General Manager, SIDBI.

The MoU "opens a new chapter in making civil helicopters more accessible to operators in India," said Sunny Guglani, Head of Airbus Helicopters, India and South Asia.

Peak power demand hovering at 235 GW amid harsh heat wave

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India's peak power demand is hovering near the projected 235 GW level in May, following excessive use of cooling appliances such as air-conditioners and desert coolers amid severe heat wave.

According to the Power Ministry data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply in the day had already reached 233 GW on May 6 compared with 221.42 GW a year ago.

Earlier in the month, the Ministry estimated the demand would peak at 235 GW during the daytime, and 225 GW during evening hours in May; and 240 GW during daytime and 235 GW during evening hours in June 2024.

Industry experts opined the demand would increase further due to the rise in the intensity of heat in May as the Southwest Monsoon, which generally brings relief from the scorching summer heat, is likely to hit the Kerala coast on June 1.

Amul goes to U.S., partners Michigan milk producers' body to sell fresh milk

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

India's largest dairy cooperative Amul has started selling fresh milk and other products in the United States in partnership with a century old local cooperative body, Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA) to sell fresh milk in East Coast and the Midwest markets.

Initially, the supplies will be in New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Washington, Dallas, and Texas, which would subsequently be expanded across all the major cities in the U.S.

The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), an umbrella body of district-level milk cooperatives in Gujarat, that markets and sells dairy products under the brand Amul, will handle the marketing and branding of fresh milk products, while milk procurement and processing will be done by the MMPA.

GCMMF will handle the marketing and branding of fresh milk products. REUTERS

As per details provided, Amul has unveiled its popular range of fresh milk in one-gallon (3.8 litres) and half-a-gallon (1.9 litres) packs under the Amul brand in the U.S.

This includes Amul Gold containing 6% fat, Amul Shakti with 4.5% milk fat, Amul Taaza with 3% milk fat and Amul Slim with 2% milk fat.

'Same as in India'

"It's the same with all compositions as it's in India," said GCMMF Managing Director Jayen Mehta.

GCMMF has been exporting Amul products including paneer; cheese, ice creams, chocolates, and other dairy items to more than 50 countries including in West Asia and Africa, catering to India's sprawling diaspora families.

Targetting the diaspora

But this is the first time, fresh milk procured and processed outside India will be sold under the brand name of Amul in the U.S.

The primary target is the Indian diaspora and Asian communities but eventually, GCMMF wants Amul to become a major dairy player with full range of its products. Moreover, it will also explore options to go in other markets beyond the U.S.

JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's top court rules Jacob Zuma cannot compete in the polls

AFP

South Africa's top court ruled on Monday that graft-tainted former President turned firebrand opposition challenger Jacob Zuma is ineligible to compete in next week's general election. The decision will outrage Mr. Zuma's supporters and stoke fears of violent unrest in the run-up to the May 29 poll. AFP

TALLINN

Russian theatre director and playwright go on trial over a play

AP

A Russian court on Monday opened the trial of a theatre director and a playwright accused of advocating terrorism in a play. Director Zhenya Berkovich, and playwright Svetlana Petriychuk have been jailed for over a year. Authorities claim their play *Finist, the Brave Falcon* justifies terrorism, which is a criminal offence in Russia. AP

MANILA

Philippines blames China for loss of giant clams in disputed shoal

AP

Presenting surveillance photographs, the Philippines blamed Chinese fishermen on Monday for a massive loss of giant clams in the disputed Scarborough Shoal controlled by China's coast guard in the South China Sea and called for an international inquiry into the amount of environmental damage in the area. AP

MOSCOW

Russia claims control of Ukrainian stronghold territory in the east

REUTERS

Russia said on Monday its forces had captured the Ukrainian village of Bilogorivka, one of the few remaining settlements in the eastern Lugansk region under Kyiv's control. Lugansk is one of four Ukrainian regions that Moscow claimed to have annexed in 2022 and taking full control of it has been a priority for the Kremlin. AFP

A hardline cleric who had the backing of the establishment

First Vice-President Mohammed Mokhber will assume interim presidential powers and Iran will hold the presidential election on June 28; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has ruled out any disruption in governance, still, it would be hard for the Islamic Republic to fill the vacuum created by the parting of one of the most loyal soldiers of its revolution

Stanly Johny

Ebrahim Raisi, like Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, wore a black turban, which means he traced his lineage back to the Prophet Muhammed. Before being elected President in November 2021, he was the chief of Iran's judiciary. A close ally of Mr. Khamenei, President Raisi escalated a crackdown on civil rights at home, strengthened Iran's ties with Russia and China and adopted a much more muscular foreign policy, which saw Tehran launching an unprecedented missile and drone attack towards Israel in April. He was seen as a potential successor to Mr. Khamenei, the most powerful man in the Islamic Republic. But such predictions did not last long.

EBRAHIM RAISI (1960 - 2024)

On Sunday, President Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and seven others were killed in a helicopter crash in the Varzaghan region of East Azerbaijan province.

Born in 1960 in a village near the holy city of Mashhad, Raisi, as a teenager, studied in a Qom seminary. When Iran erupted against the rule of the Shah in the late 1970s, Raisi, like many other seminary students, liberals and leftwing activists, joined the revolution. After the Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown and Iran became an Islamic Republic, he began his judicial career as a prosecutor in the city of Karaj. He moved to the capital in 1985 after he was appointed a deputy prosecutor of Tehran. It was this time Raisi got the attention of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

'Death commission'

After the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, Khomeini issued secret decrees condemning thousands of political prisoners to death. Then a four-man commission, which is widely known as the "death commission", was set up to carry out the executions. Raisi was reported to be a member of the commission.

Always a loyal ally of the establishment, Raisi held several important positions in Iran's judicial system. From 2004 to 2014, he was the First Deputy Chief Justice. In 2014, he was named the Attorney-General of Iran, a position which he held until 2016. Then Mr. Khamenei appointed him to run the Astan-e Quds-e Razavi (Imam Reza charity foundation), which manages a wide network of businesses and endowments. When he was appointed to the foundation, Mr. Khamenei called Raisi a "trustworthy person with high-profile experience", a rare praise from the Supreme Leader.

Raisi assumed Presidency at a critical juncture for Iran. The country's economy, battered by sanctions, was facing serious challenges. The nuclear deal, which promised removal of sanctions and economic prosperity, had fallen apart. Large-scale protests broke out across the country after Mahsa Amini, 22, died after she was arrested for not following the country's strict hijab rules.

Diplomacy took a backseat during his tenure as Iran stepped up its nuclear programme, started shipping weapons to Russia, and doubled down on its support for non-state militias across West Asia. Maximum resistance was Raisi's motto. And in Iran's clergy-dominated complex power theatre where traditionalists and moderates compete for power and influence, Raisi emerged as a strong President who has the backing of the clerical establishment.

Soldier of revolution

Raisi's death will leave a vacuum in Iran's religious-politico system. In recent years, Iran, unlike any other country, has lost several high profile figures. In January 2020, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a charismatic military commander, was assassinated by the U.S. in Baghdad in an airstrike. In November that year, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated on the outskirts of Tehran, reportedly by Israel. After the Hamas-Israel war began on October 7, 2023, Iran lost several senior military leaders. These losses pale in comparison with the death of the President and the Foreign Minister. This is the first time the Islamic Republic is losing a President, sitting or former, to such an accident.

While details are yet to emerge about the crash, the existing geopolitical tensions could fuel speculations about the accident. Iran has to quickly ascertain the reasons behind the crash, and put in place an orderly transition. First Vice President Mohammed Mokhber will assume interim presidential powers and the country will hold the presidential election on June 28. Mr. Khamenei has ruled out any disruption in governance. Still, it would be hard for Iran to fill the vacuum created by the parting of one of the most loyal soldiers of its revolution.

New Taiwan leader urges China to draw down intimidation

Safer future: Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te gives a speech at his inauguration ceremony on Monday in Taipei. GETTY IMAGES

Associated Press
TAIPEI

Taiwan's new President, Lai Ching-te, said in his inauguration speech on Monday that he wants peace with China and urged it to stop its military threats and intimidation of the self-governed island that Beijing claims as its own territory.

"I hope that China will face the reality of (Taiwan)'s existence, respect the choices of the people of Taiwan, and in good faith, choose dialogue over confrontation," Mr. Lai said after being sworn into office.

Mr. Lai pledged to "neither yield nor provoke" Beijing and said he sought peace in relations with China. But he emphasised the island democracy is determined to defend itself "in the face of the many threats and attempts at infiltration from China."

Mr. Lai's party, the Democratic Progressive Party, does not seek independence from China but maintains that Taiwan is already a sovereign nation.

'Fallacy of separatism'

The Chinese office in charge of Taiwan affairs criticised Mr. Lai's inauguration speech as promoting "the fallacy of separatism," inciting confrontation and relying on foreign forces to seek independence.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce on Monday also announced sanctions against Boeing and two other defence companies for arms sales to Taiwan.

Mr. Lai, 64, takes over from Tsai Ing-wen, who led Taiwan through eight years of economic and social development despite the COVID-19 pandemic and China's escalating military threats. Beijing views Taiwan as a renegade province and has been upping its threats to annex it by force if necessary.

Mr. Lai is seen as inheriting Ms. Tsai's progressive policies, including universal health care, backing for higher education and support for minority groups, including making Taiwan the first place in Asia to recognise same-sex marriages.

Mr. Lai accepted congratulations from fellow politicians and delegations from the 12 nations that maintain official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, as well as politicians from the U.S., Japan and various European states.

Plea for warrant against Netanyahu, Hamas leaders at ICC

Agence France-Presse
THE HAGUE

The crimes charged were committed against the Palestinian civilian population pursuant to State policy, the ICC prosecutor said

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on Monday applied for arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and top Hamas leaders on suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The landmark request was greeted with outrage in Israel, whose Foreign Minister Israel Katz slammed the application as "a historical disgrace that will be remembered forever."

'Starvation', 'murder'

Prosecutor Karim Khan said he was seeking warrants against Mr. Netanyahu and Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes including "starvation", "wilful killing", and "extermination and/or murder".

"We submit that the crimes against humanity charged were committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Palestinian civilian population pursuant to State policy. These crimes, in our assessment, continue to this day," Mr. Khan said in reference to Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Gallant.

The charges laid against the Hamas leaders including Yahya Sinwar, the head of the movement in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, the movement's political chief, include "extermination", "rape and other acts of sexual violence", and "taking hostages as a war crime".

Mr. Khan alleged that the two Hamas leaders, plus Mohammed Deif, who heads Hamas's armed wing, were "criminally responsible for the killing of hundreds of Israeli civilians" during the attacks of October 7, 2023.

Hamas said it "strongly condemns" the ICC prosecutor's application for arrest warrants against it leaders, but said it supported the ICC's move against Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Gallant.

The ICC prosecutor in 2021 opened a probe into Israel as well as Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups for possible war crimes in the Palestinian territories.

Mr. Khan has said this investigation now "extends to the escalation of hostilities and violence since the attacks that took place on October 7, 2023".

ICC judges will now decide whether the application meets the threshold for the warrants to be formally issued — a process that could take some weeks or even months.

Symbolic in nature

If granted, the warrant means that technically any of the 124 ICC member states would be obliged to arrest Mr. Netanyahu if he travelled there.

But while the warrant could complicate some travel for Mr. Netanyahu, the court has no mechanism to enforce its warrants, relying on its members to play ball.

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WBSEDCL
3rd Extension of Time
Ref. NIT No.: WBSEDCL/Communication/Tender/2023-24/SCADA/WB/1583, Dtd.: 08.02.2024 of the Chief Engineer, Communication Cell, WBSEDCL. Bid Submission End Date is hereby further extended up to 18.06.2024 (12:00 hrs.).
For details, visit https://wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbsedcl.in

कार्यालय मुख्य निर्वाचन अधिकारी, दिल्ली
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, DELHI
पुराना सेंट स्टीफन कॉलेज भवन
कश्मीरी गेट, दिल्ली -110006
Old St. Stephen's College Building
Kashmere Gate, Delhi-110006
Email:osdmedia2024@gmail.com
PUBLIC NOTICE
Prohibition on display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus and holding public meetings during the period of forty-eight hours ending with hour fixed for conclusion of the poll.
Kind attention of general public, all media houses, political parties and all contesting candidates, is invited to the section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which states that
(1) No person shall -
(a) convene, hold or attend, join or address any public meeting or procession in connection with an election; or
(b) display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus; or
(c) propagate any election matter to the public by holding, or by arranging the holding of, any musical concert or any theatrical performance or any other entertainment or amusement with a view to attracting the members of the public thereto, in any polling area during the period of forty-eight hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the poll for any election in that polling area.
It is further informed that as per sub-section 2 of Section 126 of the aforesaid Act, any person who contravenes the provisions of the sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine, or with both.
It is, therefore, informed not to convene, hold or attend, join or address any public meeting or procession in connection with General Election to Lok Sabha-2024 during the aforesaid period. It is also informed not to telecast or broadcast advertisements of political nature by means mentioned above (which may include electronic media like radio, television, cable channel, internet, website, social media and projector, live media etc.) during the aforesaid period.
It is further informed that during the aforesaid period, star campaigners and other Political Leaders should refrain from addressing the media by way of press conferences and giving interviews on election matters.
Further, it is informed that the polls in NCT of Delhi for the General Election to Lok Sabha-2024 will be held on 25.05.2024 (Saturday) from 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM.
This is issued for the information, guidance and compliance of all concerned.
Sd,
Gaurav Yadav
Joint Chief Electoral Officer
DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0069/24-25

HIGH PRAISE

It's scary bowling to Abhishek: Sunrisers skipper Cummins

K.R. DEEPAK

Explosive opening batter Abhishek Sharma received the biggest compliment of his life from Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins. "Abhishek is amazing. I wouldn't want to bowl to him. It's scary as he plays with freedom, not only against pacers but also against spinners," Cummins said.

BANG BANG

SRH becomes team with most sixes in a T20 tournament

M. VEDHAN

Sunrisers Hyderabad surpassed Royal Challengers Bengaluru to become the team with the most sixes in a T20 tournament. SRH's tally is at 160 while RCB has a total of 157 sixes, which has also come in the 2024 IPL. The other teams in the list are CSK (145 in IPL 2018), Surrey (144 in T20 Blast 2023), and KKR (143 in IPL 2019).

GETTING A CHANCE

Swapnil contemplated quitting cricket until RCB picked him

K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

When Swapnil Singh went unsold in the initial rounds of the auction, he felt it was time to end his 18-year-old career. "When I missed out, I thought that's it. I thought it was all over. I thought I would end my career after playing the next season because I did not want to keep playing all my life," Swapnil told RCB Bold Diaries.

BROADCASTER CLARIFIES

Didn't air any private conversation involving Rohit, says Star Sports

K. MURALI KUMAR

Star Sports on Monday denied airing the audio of any personal conversation involving Rohit Sharma. "The clip, taken during training on May 16, for which Star Sports had authorised access, momentarily showed the senior player in conversation with his friends. No audio from this conversation was broadcast."

Top-heavy KKR, SRH collide for a place in the final

With the openers delivering big for the Kolkata and Hyderabad outfits, the difference might come down to the spin department; Gurbaz likely to replace Salt in Shreyas' side for the marquee fixture

IPL-17

S. Dipak Ragav
AHMEDABAD

Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad kicked off their IPL campaign against each other in a high-scoring thriller in which the former prevailed by four runs. The match was a sneak peek into the game style the two outfits would employ this season, prioritising a no-holds-barred approach to batting.

Nearly two months after that game, KKR and SRH – who finished first and second in the group stages, respectively – will square off again in Qualifier-1 of the IPL playoffs at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Tuesday.

Climactic phase: It's down to the final four as IPL 2024 reaches the home stretch. VIJAY SONEJI

Narine influence

Two-time champion KKR was the first to qualify for the playoffs and seal a top-two berth, posting nine wins.

The team's inspired decision to let Sunil Narine open the innings has worked wonders, as the West Indian all-rounder has been at his marauding best.

Narine and his opening partner Phil Salt - the top two run-getters for the side - have set the tone by giving blazing starts.

It has allowed the middle and lower order the freedom not to hold back.

Even as the batters have hogged the limelight, the bowling attack has been equally effective. The spin duo of Narine (15 wickets, Eco: 6.63) and Varun Chakravarthy (18, 8.34) have led the way, giving crucial breakthroughs while being economical.

The only area of concern for Shreyas Iyer's men will be Salt's absence, who has returned to England for national duty. Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz is set to take his place in the line-up but hasn't played a game this season. KKR's last two games have been washed out, and it will be interesting to see if the long break – the team last played on May 11 – will hurt its momentum.

Meanwhile, Sunrisers sealed a place in the top-two following its four-wicket win over Punjab Kings on Sunday. Like KKR, SRH has also piggybacked on its openers, Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma – who have scored 1000 runs between them – to reach the playoffs.

However, bowling remains a concern for the 2016 champion as it has the second-worst economy rate during the middle and death-overs.

There have been four totals of 200 and above in six matches at Ahmedabad, and Tuesday's contest promises to be another high-scoring one in the battle between the two most destructive batting units.

Today's match

QUALIFIER 1

Ahmedabad, 7.30 P.M.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 26
KKR 17 | SRH 9

PREVIOUS MEETING
KKR won by 4 runs, 2024

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

Top of the charts

ORANGE
Virat Kohli (RCB)
Matches: 14
Runs: 708 | HS: 113*
SR: 155.60

PURPLE
Harshal Patel (PBKS)
Matches: 14
Wickets: 24 | BB: 3/15
Econ: 9.73

Stats after the league stage

People don't think commentators can be good cricketers, but I've done it

The veteran wicketkeeper-batter — who has had his most explosive season with the bat — says not many would have gone behind the mike, go on to play in a World Cup and have a good IPL

INTERVIEW

Dinesh Karthik

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

In Royal Challengers Bengaluru's rise from the dead – winning six matches on the bounce to storm into the playoffs – Dinesh Karthik's has been an integral role. His 315 runs have come at a strike-rate of 195.65, his best across 17 seasons. The veteran wicket-keeper batter spoke to *The Hindu* ahead of Wednesday's Eliminator against Rajasthan Royals.

Is there one single moment that helped change things?

I thought the SRH [Sunrisers Hyderabad] game midway... they scored 280 [287]. The way we came back with the bat [262] gave us confidence. Post that, we kind of turned it around. Even though the next result didn't go our way [one-run loss to KKR], it worked for us as a team.

Did the freedom of playing every game as if there was nothing to lose help?

The trigger: Karthik said the game against Sunrisers turned things around for Royal Challengers. R.V. MOORTHY

Definitely not going to say no. It was a place where you had nothing to lose. So why not do things differently. Though, you have to back that up with skill. It'd look rather silly if you don't pull it off. You could definitely lose a lot of your pride and dignity.

We always knew we were a team with good skillsets. Though, there is no point having that in the shed and not bringing it to the ground. The support staff encouraged us to do that and the senior players have followed it up with their work on and off the field.

IPL-17 has been one of your best seasons. What have you done differently?

It is about understanding what the bowlers are trying to do when I come in and trying to counter that. Getting fitter and stronger are two things I have done off the field. I came in with this taboo of a commentator being a player. There was a lot of scepticism. That really challenged me. Not many would have been a commentator, gone on to represent their country in a World Cup and then had a good IPL season. Last year, it wasn't a good IPL. So it was also about responding to all the questions that were asked.

Has commentary helped your cricket?

Yes. To the point where I realised that you don't need to take what's being said about you too seriously. A lot of things are said in jest, and are not personal attacks.

And you rub shoulders with the likes of Michael Atherton, Nasser Hussain, Ian Bishop and others. You not only learn about cricket but also about how they handle life. It increases your worldly knowledge and also helps elevate your self-esteem when you are talking to the world.

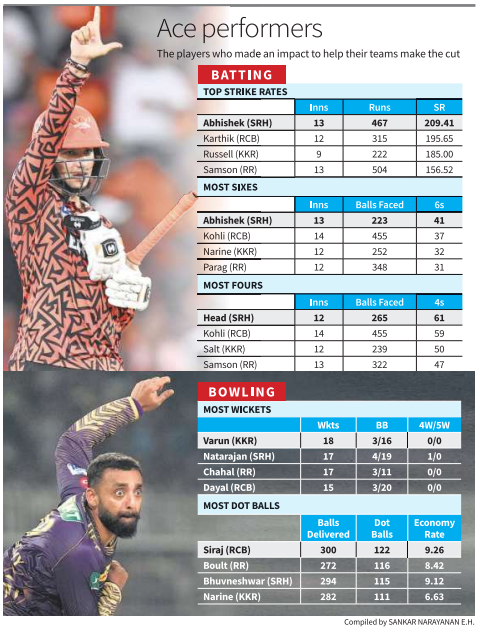
What drives you as a player? Do you take inspiration from other sportspersons?

Michael Jordan's *The Last Dance* inspired me quite a bit. The reason to play sport changes at different points. For the longest time, it was about representing India and becoming the best wicketkeeper-batter. There were many who felt I couldn't make a comeback and I pushed myself for that. Last season, it didn't go well, so I wanted to finish on a good note. People don't think commentators can be good cricketers, but today, I have done what I have done.

I don't say a lot of things outside, but internalise and push myself. Like, on a day when I am doing commentary, I wake up at 6 and run. There is no need for that because I just have to talk about the game. But if I have to play IPL, I have to run.

If RCB goes all the way, will you play one more year?

It's tricky. I don't want to think too far ahead. I know what my endgame is and I will leave it at that.



Ace performers

The players who made an impact to help their teams make the cut

BATTING

TOP STRIKE RATES

	Inns	Runs	SR
Abhishek (SRH)	13	467	209.41
Karthik (RCB)	12	315	195.65
Russell (KKR)	9	222	185.00
Samson (RR)	13	504	156.52

MOST SIXES

	Inns	Balls Faced	6s
Abhishek (SRH)	13	223	41
Kohli (RCB)	14	455	37
Narine (KKR)	12	252	32
Parag (RR)	12	348	31

MOST FOURS

	Inns	Balls Faced	4s
Head (SRH)	12	265	61
Kohli (RCB)	14	455	59
Salt (KKR)	12	239	50
Samson (RR)	13	322	47

BOWLING

MOST WICKETS

	Wkts	BB	4W/5W
Varun (KKR)	18	3/16	0/0
Natarajan (SRH)	17	4/19	1/0
Chahal (RR)	17	3/11	0/0
Dayal (RCB)	15	3/20	0/0

MOST DOT BALLS

	Balls Delivered	Dot Balls	Economy Rate
Siraj (RCB)	300	122	9.26
Boult (RR)	272	116	8.42
Bhuvneshwar (SRH)	294	115	9.12
Narine (KKR)	282	111	6.63

Compiled by SANKAR NARAYANAN E.H.

INBRIEF

Nelly Korda claims her sixth LPGA title of year

World No. 1 Nelly Korda continued her remarkable year by clinching her sixth win on the LPGA Tour with victory at the Mizuho Americas Open golf at Liberty National in Jersey City on Sunday. Korda duelled with Australian Hannah Green throughout the final round in Jersey City but Green made a bogey on the final hole. Korda's one-under round of 71 was enough for the one stroke victory.

India blanks Jordan in Asia-Oceania Junior Davis Cup

Samarth Sahita and Aaradhya Kshitij helped India beat Jordan 3-0 in a group-B league match of Asia-Oceania Junior Davis Cup under-16 boys tennis tournament in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Monday. India will play Indonesia and Hong Kong over the next two days in the league phase.

The results (league): India bt Jordan 3-0 (Samarth Sahita bt Amir Jaber 6-3, 6-2; Aaradhya Kshitij bt Malek Al-Qurneh 6-1, 6-2; Aaradhya & Samarth bt Malek & Amir 6-4, 3-6, [10-3]).

Dhruv Bopana claims under-13 title

Tamil Nadu's Dhruv Bopana from the Indian Squash and Triathlon Academy (ISTA) defeated second seed Fareed Andrabi of Rajasthan 11-8, 19-17, 11-8 in the final to clinch the boys' under-13 title at the Poona Club squash open.

Parv Nage meets Neeraj Yashpaul in second round

Parv Nage fought his way past Sarthak Gulati 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 to set up a second-round duel against top seed Neeraj Yashpaul in the HPCL Mittal ₹1,00,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament in Chandigarh, on Monday.

Important results (first round): Neeraj Yashpaul bt Gurbaaz Narang 7-6(3), 6-2; Parv Nage bt Sarthak Gulati 6-2, 3-6, 6-1; Vatsal Manikantan bt Shorya Jishtu 6-1, 6-0; Eklavya Singh bt Raghav Singh 6-0, 6-1; Vlasier Khate bt Yash Baghel 6-1, 7-6(2); Rakshit Dhankar bt Tanik Gupta 6-2, 6-3; Rohan Mittal bt Utkarsh Tiwari 7-5, 6-3; Moksh Puri bt Prag Sheoran 7-6(2), 6-1; Nirav Shetty bt Omar Sumar 6-3, 6-1; Paramveer Bajwa bt Trishan Dhawan 6-1, 6-1; Joy Das bt Aditya Ralhan 6-4, 6-1; Rhythm Malhotra bt Abhimanyu Sharma 6-1 (conceded); Ajay Kundu bt Sahajpreet Singh Bajwa 6-1, 6-3.

Aryan stumbles at the final hurdle in Jamaica

Aryan Shah lost 6-1, 6-1 to third seed Kiranpal Pannu of New Zealand in the final of the $15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Kingston.

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Qualifier 1, Star Sports 1 , & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
USA vs Bangladesh: 1st T20I, FanCode, 8.30 p.m.

Creditable foray: The quartet of Amoj Jacob, Jyothika Sri Dandi, Muhammed Ajmal, and Subha Venkatesan with its reward. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Indian mixed 4x400m team sets National record

The timing puts India in the 21st place in World Athletics' Road to Paris list while the aim was to be either in the 15th or 16th spot

ASIAN RELAYS

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

India's mixed 4x400 relay team set a National record while winning the gold medal at the inaugural edition of Asian Relay Championships here on Monday but missed the target of entering the Paris Olympics qualification bracket.

The quartet of Muhammed Ajmal, Jyothika Sri Dandi, Amoj Jacob and Subha Venkatesan clocked 3 minutes 14.12 to better the 3:14.34 time that was clocked by the Indian team while winning silver at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year.

Sri Lanka finished second with a time of 3:17.00 while Vietnam was third with 3:18.45.

Monday's timing will put India in the 21st place – from earlier 23rd – in the Road to Paris list of World Athletics while the aim was to be either in the 15th or 16th spot.

Difficult position

India, thus, is in a difficult position to make the Olympics cut as only sixteen teams will compete in the mixed 4x400m relay event in Paris.

India will compete in the 4x400m relay races on Day 2 on Tuesday.

Deepthi wins 400m with world record time

What a run! Deepthi also set an Asian mark on her way to the gold. FLICKR/PARALYMPICS

PARA ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India
KOBE

Deepthi Jeevanji clinched gold with a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race at the World Para Athletics Championships here on Monday.

Deepthi bettered American Breanna Clark's time of 55.12s set during last year's edition in Paris. Deepthi had qualified for the final after winning her heats in an Asian record time of 56.18s on Sunday. The T20 category is meant for athletes who have intellectual impairment.

Yogesh Kathuniya claimed a silver in men's F56 category discus with an effort of 41.80 metres.

The F56 category is meant for athletes who compete in field events from a seated position. Different athletes, including those with amputations and spinal cord injuries compete in this class.

Zverev pockets a sixth Masters crown

Reuters
ROME

Alexander Zverev warmed up for the French Open by winning his sixth Masters title when he beat Nicolas Jarry 6-4, 7-5 in the Italian Open showpiece on Sunday. It was a second title in Rome for Zverev, having won his first in 2017 when he was 20, and his first trophy since he broke his ankle in the French Open semifinals in 2022. The 27-year-old will also climb to fourth in the rankings.

Liverpool confirms Slot as new manager

Reuters
LONDON

Liverpool has appointed Feyenoord's Arne Slot as manager to replace Juergen Klopp next season, the Premier League club announced on Monday. Slot has been in charge of the Dutch team since 2021.

Xander Schauffele wins his maiden Major with a record score

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Agence France-Presse
LOUISVILLE

Xander Schauffele outdueled Bryson DeChambeau and Viktor Hovland down the back nine on Sunday to win the PGA Championship, capturing his first Major triumph and snapping a two-year victory drought.

Third-ranked Schauffele, the reigning Olympic champion, won a tension-packed drama over the closing holes, firing a six-under par 65 to finish 72 holes at Valhalla on 21-under 263, the lowest winning score in Major golf history. Victory was worth $3.33 million to Schauffele.

That was good enough for a one-stroke victory over fellow-American DeChambeau, the 2020 US Open champion who fired a closing 64, with Norway's Hovland, last year's PGA runner-up, third on 266 after shooting a 66.

Memorable victory: Schauffele either led or shared the lead after each round to win the Wanamaker Trophy. GETTY IMAGES

The record low under-par winning score had been 20-under, done four times, most recently by Australian Cameron Smith at the 2022 British Open.

Schauffele, who had 12 prior top-10 major finishes without a victory, had not won an event since the 2022 Scottish Open, having had 19 top-10 finishes during his drought. "I was kind of emotional after the putt lipped in," Schauffele said. "It has been a while since I won. I told myself this is my opportunity so let's capture it."

DeChambeau rolled in a birdie putt from just beyond 10 feet at the par-5 18th hole, the ball barely dropping in, to match Schauffele for the lead at 20-under.

Schauffele had a chance to win with a birdie at 18 but his tee shot was in the left rough on the edge of a fairway bunker. He calmly blasted his second shot just short of the green into the fairway, 36 yards from the hole.

Schauffele dropped his approach six feet from the hole and the ball made a slight roll on the edge as it fell in to give him a wire-to-wire triumph. Not since Phil Mickelson in 2005 at Baltusrol had a player birdied the 72nd hole to win the Wanamaker Trophy.

Final scores: 263: Xander Schauffele (USA) 62-68-68-65; **264:** Bryson DeChambeau (USA) 68-65-67-64; **266:** Viktor Hovland (Nor) 68-66-66-66; **269:** Collin Morikawa (USA) 66-65-67-71, Thomas Detry (Bel) 66-67-70-66; **270:** Shane Lowry (Irl) 69-69-62-70, Justin Rose (Eng) 70-67-64-69.

Four-star Sorloth spearheads Villarreal's draw with Madrid

EURO LEAGUES

Associated Press
MADRID

Barcelona routed Rayo Vallecano 3-0 to secure the lucrative second place in the Spanish league on Sunday, while champion Real Madrid drew 4-4 at Villarreal with Norway striker Alexander Sorloth scoring all four goals for the host.

Real Sociedad secured the last Europa League spot with a 2-0 win at Real Betis, which was left with a place in the Europa Conference League.

Pedri scored twice and Robert Lewandowski once for Barcelona, which kept a four-point gap to Girona with a round to go.

The results: LaLiga: Barcelona 3 (Lewandowski 3, Pedri 72, 75) bt Rayo Vallecano 0; Granada 1 (Mendez 87) lost to Celta Vigo 2 (Larsen 61, Bamba 63); Valencia 1 (Pepelu 84-pen) lost to Girona 3 (Savinho 32, Dovbyk 58, Gasiorowski 67-og).
Atletico Madrid 1 (Morata 55) lost to Osasuna 4 (Garcia 26, 64, Oroz 52, Torro 88); Cadiz 0 drew with Las Palmas 0; Real Betis 0 lost to Real Sociedad 2 (Mendez 5, Merino 42); Mallorca 2 (Larin 29, Darder 83) drew with Almeria 2 (Arribas 41, Langa 66).
Villarreal 4 (Sorloth 39, 48, 52, 56) drew with Real Madrid 4 (Guler 14, 45+2, Joselu 30, Vazquez 40); Athletic Bilbao 2 (Garcia 17, Muniain 19) bt Sevilla 0.
Serie A: Inter Milan 1 (Dumfries 87) drew with Lazio 1 (Kamada 32); Udinese 1 (Samardzic 90+14-pen) drew with Empoli 1 (Niang 90-pen); Roma 1 (Lukaku 79) bt Genoa 0.

Sorloth. REUTERS

Carlsen emerges champion of Casablanca Chess Variant

Sports Bureau

Magnus Carlsen won the Casablanca Chess Variant tournament in Casablanca (Morocco) on Sunday. The World No. 1 from Norway finished the four-player event with 4.5 points from six rounds.

Anand third

In the tournament, in which the players were required to make moves from certain positions onwards from well-known games from the past, Hikaru Nakamura of the United States was the runner-up with 3.5 points.

Viswanathan Anand was third. The five-time World champion from India scored three points while Bassem Amin of Egypt finished last with one point.

The final day featured games from the World championship matches between Alexander Alekhine and Max Euwe (1935), Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov (1987) and Anna Ushenina and Hou Yifan (2013).

Carslen said he would like to play the format again.

"With one exception in game two, all the positions were very rich with lots of play," he said.

"It doesn't really matter if you are playing white or black, because you know that the position is equal and there are chances for both sides.

"It is also a lot of fun to end up in positions that I don't play too often. I enjoyed it a lot."

On top: Carlsen finished the four-player event with 4.5 points from six rounds. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

India set to lose Asian Games medal after Parveen's suspension

BOXING

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

Following boxer Parveen Hooda's 22-month suspension for a whereabouts failure, India is set to lose a bronze medal from the Hangzhou Asian Games.

The International Testing Agency (ITA), the organisation responsible for results management, has confirmed Parveen's suspension until July 16, 2025 for three whereabouts failures within a 12-month period as defined in article 2.4 of the International Boxing Association's anti-doping rules.

"In addition to the period of ineligibility, the athlete's results obtained between December 11, 2022 until May 17, 2024 are disqualified," said ITA in a statement. While confirming that Parveen would lose her Asian Games medal, Boxing Federation of India (BFI) secretary Hemanta Kalita said: "The ITA reduced her suspension by eight months, but cancelled her results during that period as well."

Parveen. FILE PHOTO

The BFI has decided to field Jaismine Lamboria in the women's 57kg in the last Olympic qualifier, starting in Bangkok from Friday, in its bid to reclaim the quota place.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Kunal, Shoraab lead Carpediem victory

Kunal Singh's unbeaten 83-ball 127 and Shoraab Dhariwal's 89 not out helped Carpediem India beat Collage Sports Club by six wickets in the 47th All India Lala Raghubir Singh Hot Weather tournament.

The scores: Collage Sports 290 in 38 overs (Ekansh Dobal 62, Robin Bisht 57, Bharat Sharma 39, Sunil 4/57) lost to Carpediem India 296/4 in 37 overs (Kunal Singh 127 n.o., Shoraab Dhariwal 89 n.o.).

Ajmal Khan downs Harsha Sports

Lakshay Bhardwaj and Daksh Dhingai scored 71 runs each and Gagan picked up five wickets as Ajmal Khan Club beat Harsha Sports by nine wickets in the inaugural match of fourth Harcourt Butler tournament.

The scores: Harsha Sports 165 in 37 overs (Nikhil Kumar 56, Uday Sharma 47, Gagan 5/31 Niyam Garkhal 4/22) lost to Ajmal Khan Club 167/1 in 31 overs (Lakshay Bhardwaj 71 n.o., Daksh Dhingai 71).

Siddiqui slams a ton

Kaif Siddiqui scored 110, Ankur Nain made 60 and Saurav Kataria picked up three wickets as Young Delhi Sports Club beat Citizen CC by 106 runs in the DDCA T20 League.

The scores: Young Delhi 205/4 in 20 overs (Kaif Siddiqui 110, Ankur Nain 60) bt Citizen CC 99 in 19 overs (Hriday Sanswal 45, Saurav Kataria 3/23).
Tilak Nagar Colts 205/6 in 20 overs (Raghav Sharnam 102) bt Hind CC 135/9 in 20 overs (Sumit Kumar 28).
Tedco Club 96 in 18 overs (Sarthak Rana 34, Shiv Puri 3/21, Vishal Bajrangi 3/25) lost to Golden Eagle 98 in 9.3 overs (Deepanshu 64 n.o., Manthan 31 n.o.).
Kishan Ganj Gymkhana 146/7 in 20 overs (Aditya Kumar 46, Jaspreet 34, Arun Kumar 3/26) bt Delhi Colts 138 in 18 overs (Gaurav Gaur 40, Harish Dagar 3/23, Gurnoor Singh Bagga 3/34).
Times of India 134/7 in 20 overs (Ajay Gulia 37, Brian Jha 3/39) lost to Delhi CC 136/5 in 17 overs (Tanishk Sachdev 58).
Rehman CC 156/8 in 20 overs (Kautsya Gangwar 80, Mahaksh Deewan 4/25) lost to Sonnex Club 157/2 in 13 overs (Arjun Berry 85, Arpit Garg 44).
Harsha Sports 233/3 in 20 overs (Krishang Sehrawat 113, Soham 65) bt Three Star Club 185/8 in 20 overs (Vansh Anand 31).
Super Star Club 175/6 in 20 overs (Vansh Sharma 38, Varun Vats 4/10) bt Kranti Star Club 98 in 19 overs (Om Choudhary 32).
Youngster CC 145 in 19 overs (Neeraj Yadav 50, Prabhjot Singh 3/26, Manish Dutta 3/26) lost to Delhi Gymkhana 148/3 in 13 overs (Anmol 85).
Ekta Club 145/7 in 20 overs (Ujwal Sharma 63) lost to Jat Heroes 146/2 in 16 overs (Roshan Yadav 55, Saeed 49).
United India 183/8 in 20 overs (Vishal Razdan 61, Ramanjeet 3/48) bt Rani Bagh CC 164/8 in 20 overs (Vihaan Sharma 54, Nikhil Singh 48, Vishal Razdan 3/14, Mohit Khatri 3/17).

GRM Academy lifts under-17 title

Man-of-the-Match Krish Murthi scored an unbeaten 96 and Amir Khan picked up four wickets as GRM Academy beat Delhi Cricket Hub by six wickets in the final to lift the first Summer Cup Under-17 tournament title.

The scores: DCH 175 in 39.5 overs (Akshay Sharma 62, Amir Khan 4/29) lost to GRMA 176/4 in 35 overs (Krish Murthi 96 n.o.).

Velavan progressing steadily, both on and off the court

He reveals that he has been working with a mental conditioning coach, Price, for many months now and attributes his growth to incorporating techniques such as meditation and visualisation into his daily routine

M. VEDHAN & GETTY IMAGES

S. Prasanna Venkatesan

Velavan Senthilkumar won the Batch Open in Paris by the end of last month and subsequently reached his career-best singles ranking of 55 in the PSA men's singles World rankings. On Wednesday (May 15), he won the men's doubles title with his partner Abhay Singh at the HCL National doubles squash championship.

Last year, he had his first and the best year as a full-time professional squash player. He began 2023 from outside 200 in the rankings and had risen to No. 66 in November, courtesy of four PSA titles.

One striking aspect of his game last year was that he'd been nerveless in crunch moments or periods that enabled him to manage come-from-behind victories.

For instance, he rallied from two games down to put it across Miles Jenkins of England, 11-13, 12-14, 11-7, 12-10, 11-6, in the 69-minute quarterfinal of the Gibraltar Open he won in July. And playing the defending champion Abhay Singh in the final, he saved two game points from 8-10 down to make it 10-all before clinching the third game 12-10 and thus the match, 12-10, 11-3, 12-10, to win his maiden singles National title in November.

Speaking after that win, he had attributed his progress to the incorporation of mental techniques such as meditation and visualisation into his daily routine.

"I think, a lot of meditation; just different techniques of meditation. It was like an everyday thing – in the morning and the evening. Probably 10 to 15 minutes. Probably, a bit of visualisation as well. I kind of visualise myself on court and how I play. It's just some visualisation techniques," he had said.

Asked if he would envisage taking on that particular opponent on matchdays, he said said: "Obviously. How I would see myself playing the match. Like, I would see myself playing the match from inside the court, and from outside the court from the spectators' point of view."

He also highlighted his staying-in-the-moment mindset for every point he plays.

"I would say that's something I've been working on – to be more present, and just focus on every single point rather than the outcome. I think that's kind of helped me to play each and every point the same way, irrespective of what the score is."

Velavan had also mentioned how his background in Psychology – he completed his Under-Graduate (UG) degree in Psychology from the Columbia University in the U.S. in 2022 – has also been beneficial to his performance. His understanding of the brain and how it works has helped him become more aware of his mental state in different situations.

"I mean, it's just more information. I kind of understood the brain better, I would say. And how it works. I would just say that it was easier for me to understand more about how my mind was in certain situations. I just felt like I could know. I was aware of it easier than usual. If I didn't do psychology, I might have taken more time to be aware of it. That way it's helpful," he said.

Speaking after the win on Wednesday, he revealed that he's been working with a mental coach, Paul Price. The Australian, a former World No. 4, has been working to enhance Velavan's mental resilience and overall performance by providing personalised strategies and support.

"I've been working with him probably since September and it's been really helpful. So, I speak with him before and during every tournament – before and after my match. I'm always in constant contact with him and that really helps a lot," said the 26-year-old.

A former professional player, Price has been able to provide guidance in navigating the emotional highs and lows that come with competitive sports.

"I feel like he really understands what a squash player goes through specifically in terms of dealing with a win and a loss. Sometimes, after a loss, you're just really low, and then there are some things that he's helped me navigate that works for me."

Personalised approach

Velavan works together with Price to find what specifically works for his liking. They employ the best techniques or routines that suit his individual needs and preferences.

"For example, there are certain things that I have, that I need to do during the day that helps me stay really calm. It's probably just like reading. I like to slow down time a little bit, because sometimes I just find myself in fast pace and just moving from one thing to the other.

"I just changed a lot of things in my everyday routine and that's really helped. We've together navigated what specifically works for me to my liking. Like, sometimes, movies; reading different types of books, just stuff like that. It takes my mind off a match or squash for a bit."

The reigning singles National champion mentioned that playing doubles requires a different type of training and said that he and Abhay specifically practise together before any doubles tournament.

"I enjoy playing doubles. It's a lot of fun. It's a lot of different angles. It's a whole different game from the singles and it does take a specific type of training.

"The more doubles you play, the better you are at it. Abhay and I, if we have a doubles tournament coming up, we just practise a little bit to get back our body language and get our minds into it – dealing with different angles and the width of the court."

He said that they both have a good on-court connection and boost each other's confidence during matches. "I'm a left-hander. So, both of us play forehand on both sides!" he added.

The pair, by virtue of having won the men's doubles National title, will represent India in the men's doubles category at the Asian doubles championships in July at Johor in Malaysia.

Speaking about their chances at the event, he said: "It's going to be hard for sure. But I also think we are a really good pair to have a chance at a medal at the Asian Doubles.

"Malaysia is going to be tough. And then, there is also Hong Kong. I think these two (will be tough competitors), off the top of my head."

THE GIST

- A striking aspect of Velavan's game last year was his come-from-behind victories as he kept his nerve in crunch situations
- He feels his background in Psychology has also helped his performance
- Velavan thinks his coach Price understands what a squash player goes through specifically in terms of dealing with a win and a loss

An overlooked molecule could solve the Venus water mystery

'That Venus is 100,000-times drier than earth is an anomaly that deserves an explanation. Is Venus abnormally dry? Is the earth abnormally wet? Depending on which one is the exception, the implications for planetary habitability are different,' a planetary scientist said

Karthik Vinod

More than four billion years ago, Venus had enough water to cover its surface with an ocean 3 km deep. Today, the planet only has enough for this ocean to be 3 cm deep.

Scientists have been able to account for a lot of the water Venus lost in this time – but not all of it. Now, a team of scientists in the U.S. may have made a crucial advance.

The team's findings, reported in a paper in *Nature*, could plug a long-standing gap between the amount of water scientists expected Venus to have lost in the last 4.5 billion years and how much satellite observations say the planet has actually lost, which is a lot more.

"We have a pretty cool thing here," co-author Eryn Cangi, a planetary scientist at the University of Colorado Boulder, told *The Hindu*. "And it was time to release it into the community and see what they make of it."

"The bigger picture is about planetary habitability, and more specifically the history of water on Venus compared to the earth," Emmanuel Marcq, a planetary scientist at France's Laboratoire Atmosphères, Milieux, Observations Spatiales, who was not involved in the study, said.

Scientists have been able to account for a lot of the water Venus lost, but not all of it. KEVIN M. GILL (CC BY 2.0)

Following the water trail

There are two reasons why Venus lost its water. The first is its hellish atmosphere – a result of its carbon dioxide-rich composition, which causes a strong greenhouse effect. The planet's surface is hotter than water's boiling point, simmering at 450 degrees C. So water can only exist as vapour in Venus' atmosphere.

Second, water was a victim of the planet's proximity to the Sun. The Sun's heat and ultraviolet radiation combined to shred water molecules into their constituent hydrogen and oxygen atoms in Venus's ionosphere – the upper region of the atmosphere, where charged atoms, molecules, and their electrons zoom around at high speeds.

However, we don't know the rates at which these processes happened. "There's a couple different theories about how [water levels] changed over time," Dr. Cangi said. The two theories broadly blame thermal and non-thermal processes for the water loss.

The thermal process refers to hydrodynamic escape. As the Sun heated Venus's outer atmosphere, it expanded, allowing hydrogen gas to leak to space. This escape lasted until the outer atmosphere sufficiently cooled, by about 2.5 billion years ago.

Dr. Cangi and her colleagues' research focused on how water loss occurs in the present day, specifically via a non-thermal process.

They focused on hydrogen atoms escaping Venus to space. Water levels drop as a result because the oxygen atoms left behind have fewer hydrogen atoms with which to form water.

However, estimates of the water-loss rate before Dr. Cangi's study suggested the planet had more water than what satellite observations indicated.

Dr. Cangi and her colleagues reported that the discrepancy vanished when they accounted for a chemical reaction that, according to a statement accompanying the paper, the scientific community had overlooked for more than five decades.

The key findings

Dr. Cangi first encountered the formyl cation (HCO^+) – a positively charged molecule – during her PhD days, when she was studying water loss in Mars' atmosphere.

Scientists have known for a while that HCO^+ molecules drive hydrogen escape on Mars. According to Dr. Cangi, the Venusian and the Martian upper atmospheres are similar, so she and her colleagues decided to model the same underlying reactions in Venus' ionosphere.On Venus, the team found that a particular reaction, called the HCO^+ dissociative recombination reaction (DR) occurs in bulk at an altitude of about 125 km, above the clouds made of sulphuric acid.

HCO^+ is created when a carbon monoxide molecule (CO) loses an electron while absorbing an hydrogen atom. DR is the reverse reaction: HCO^+ absorbs an electron and breaks up into CO and an hydrogen atom. These energetic hydrogen atoms then escape into space.

The team built models to simulate the influence of this reaction on the upper atmosphere, and found that it accelerated water decline once the hydrodynamic escape of hydrogen gas ended.

Specifically, the researchers found HCO^+ DR could have doubled the rate at which Venus lost water by hydrogen escape.

This means if Venus had oceans in the past, they could have lasted longer than expected – because the faster rate of hydrogen escape means the planet could have lost more water in the same amount of time.

> The planet's surface is hotter than water's boiling point, simmering at 450 degrees C. So water can only exist as vapour in Venus's atmosphere

Further, the model predicted that the amount of water on Venus would have stayed roughly the same from nearly 2 billion years ago. This is because, as a non-thermal process, the HCO^+ DR reaction would've gone on indefinitely and drained all the water. (The thermal process was time-bound because the upper atmosphere returned to thermal equilibrium). Yet Venus still has some water today.According to Dr. Marcq, one way water could have been replenished was by comet impacts.

The missing molecule

However, we have no proof that HCO^+ ions existed in Venus's atmosphere in the first place – let alone proof that they participated in the HCO^+ DR process.

The authors wrote in their paper that past space missions had neglected looking for HCO^+ ions, and that orbiters sent to Venus couldn't decipher the chemical signatures of HCO^+ DR from afar. These missions instead paid attention to other important atmospheric chemical reactions that scientists were interested in. According to Dr. Cangi, there would have had to be a connection between HCO^+ DR and water loss on Venus for scientists to have shown interest.

This said, she said the team's analysis of data collected by the NASA Pioneer Venus orbiter (launched 1978) contained some indirect evidence of HCO^+ DR.

"By looking at the other molecules that are important in the chemistry to form it, we saw that those are present in an amount that would imply [HCO^+] should be there," Dr. Cangi said.

Future Venus missions

Dr. Marcq referred to a *Nature Astronomy* paper published in April in which scientists reported finding a signature of carbon ions escaping Venus in data collected by the BepiColombo spacecraft. "At least qualitatively, it seems to support the [HCO^+ DR] model," Dr. Marcq said. The quantitative evidence remains wanting.

Dr. Cangi implored scientists working on future Venus missions to look for HCO^+ in the planet's upper atmosphere. She referred to NASA's MAVEN mission to Mars as an example of a mission dedicated to probing the upper atmosphere. "If we had a similar mission to Venus, I think we could learn a lot."

Most upcoming Venus missions are focused on the lower atmosphere instead.

"The fact that Venus is [100,000-times] drier than the earth is ... an anomaly that deserves an explanation," Dr. Marcq said. "Is Venus abnormally dry? Is the earth abnormally wet? Depending on which one is the exception, the implications for planetary habitability are different."

(Karthik Vinod is an intern with The Hindu.)

The baobab lineage originated in Madagascar roughly 21 million years ago. REUTERS

The baobab's journey from Madagascar to Africa and Australia

Reuters

The baobab tree is a distinctive sight on the landscape. When its contorted branches are leafless during the dry season, they resemble jumbled roots emanating from a thick trunk, making it appear as if someone had yanked the tree from the ground, flipped it on its head, and jammed it back into the earth.

But the origins and history of the baobab, found in Madagascar and parts of Africa and Australia, have been something of a mystery. A new study has resolved this based on genomic analyses of all eight recognised species as well as ecological and geological data.

The baobab lineage originated in Madagascar roughly 21 million years ago and reached Africa and Australia sometime in the past 12 million years, the researchers found. Madagascar, an island off Africa's southeastern coast, is a biodiversity hot spot and home to unusual flora and fauna.

Two baobab lineages went extinct in Madagascar, but not before establishing themselves elsewhere, one in Africa and one in Australia, the study found.

The tale of how a tree crossed the Indian Ocean to put down roots in two distant destinations is dramatic. It appears baobab seed pods floated from

> **The dispersal to Australia was probably facilitated by the Indian Ocean gyre which likely picked up baobab seed pods as it moved past Madagascar**

Madagascar to mainland Africa, located about 400 km to the west, and to Australia, situated more than nearly 7,000 km to the east.

"The plants almost certainly got to Africa and Australia floating on or with vegetation rafts," said botanist Tao Wan of the Wuhan Botanical Garden in China, one of the authors of the study published on May 14 in the journal Nature.

"The long-distance dispersal to Australia was probably facilitated by the Indian Ocean gyre, which is an oceanic current that circulates south past Madagascar, where it probably picked up baobab seed pods, before the current swings east to Australia, where it delivered the pods. The current then circulates north and then swings west past Mauritius and to Africa once again, where it completes the gyre," Dr. Wan added.

Baobabs, found in dry savannah habitats, provide food, shelter and nesting sites for wildlife. Their fruits also provide nutrients and medicines for people, and the leaves are edible. The trees produce large, sweet-smelling flowers whose sugary nectar attracts nocturnal pollinators as well as two types of primates, lemurs in Madagascar and bush babies in Africa.

"They can reach huge dimensions ... in both height and diameter, and are reported to live for thousands of years. The root systems are also massive, which are considered to play an important ecological role, helping to slow down soil erosion and enabling nutrient recycling," plant geneticist and study co-author Ilia Leitch of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in London said.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Condensed matter physics

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

QUESTION 1

Name the assistant in Humphrey Davy's lab who, in 1823, liquefied all the gases known at the time excluding hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. In the post-industrial era, Davy was among the first scientists to deduce atoms were not indivisible by observing the physical properties of matter.

QUESTION 2

In 1900, German physicist ____ _____ tried to explain the path of an electron moving through solid metal. His model was quite imperfect but became the basis for early steps in the study of quantum mechanics by others. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 3

In the 1930s, Arnold Sommerfeld used quantum mechanics to solve many open problems. But his model couldn't explain the _____ effect. Here, a metal doped with a magnetic impurity counterintuitively causes the metal's resistance to increase as it approaches absolute zero. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 4

In 1980, Gerhard Dorda, Michael Pepper, and X discovered the quantum Hall effect. When a strong magnetic field is applied top-down on a cold, 2D sheet of electrons, an electric resistance arises across the sheet's breadth. And the resistance value can only increase or decrease in fixed steps. Name X, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1985.

QUESTION 5

A Bose-Einstein condensate is an exotic state of matter in which quantum phenomena, otherwise invisible to the naked eye, become visible. Name the three physicists who led two teams in 1995 to first produce it in the lab, later sharing a Nobel Prize for the feat.

Answers to May 16 quiz:

1. The cycle the Sun completes after two solar cycles – **Ans: Hale cycle**
2. Small, dark patches the Sun develops as it nears the peak of a solar cycle – **Ans: Sunspots**
3. Astronomer for whom law relating location of sunspots on the Sun is named – **Ans: Gustav Spörer**
4. Process that produces the Sun's magnetic field – **Ans: Solar dynamo**
5. Name for period between 1645 and 1715 – **Ans: Maunder Minimum**

Visual: **Tachocline**

First contact: Vijayram Ganasala | K.N. Viswanathan | ViswanadhaRao Batchu | Saurav Agarwal | Rahul Raj

Visual: Name this physicist who made several groundbreaking contributions to condensed-matter and particle physics.